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No 8

THE SEA WANDERER
or The Cruise of a
Submarine Boat



BY CORNELIUS SHEA

Suddenly a startling thing took place. A score of half-naked savages rushed from the woods, sprang into the water and upon the deck of the *Sea Wanderer*.

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A Different Complete Story Every Week

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THE SEA WANDERER;

OR,

The Cruise of the Submarine Boat.

By CORNELIUS SHEA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES OUR PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS AND AN ICEBERG.

A steamer is just leaving the pier in New York, and the crowd of people, who have come to see their relatives and friends off, are waving their handkerchiefs in a last farewell.

Standing upon the steamer's deck are three persons, who are to play prominent parts in this story.

The elder of the trio is a man of fifty, very short and very stout, and jolly looking as a man could be, whom we shall know as Professor Lehman.

The other two are boys of seventeen, or thereabouts, both being finely built, good-looking young fellows.

Ben Mellville is on the professor's right, and Joe Summers on his left, and the trio, as they stand there on the deck of the steamer, make quite a picture.

Ben Mellville and Joe Summers are the sons of wealthy parents, and the professor is their tutor, who is engaged to take them abroad, so they may see the Old World, and, at the same time, keep up their studies in the two branches the professor is most efficient in—electricity and mineralogy.

"Well, professor, our voyage has begun," said Ben Mellville, as the steamer turned her prow in the direction of Sandy Hook.

"Yes, Ben," was the professor's reply, "this is the beginning of our trip; let us hope that, when it has ended, we shall be able to say we have seen and learned a great many wonderful and useful things."

"We will surely be able to say that," spoke up Joe Summers.

"There is one thing I would like to see, and that is something really wonderful in the way of an electric motor."

"Pshaw! Joe, you are 'dead stuck' on electricity. Some of these days we shall hear of you being blown up by it," exclaimed Ben Mellville, with a laugh.

"Don't let anything like that worry you," remarked the professor. "Joe is pretty well versed in electricity, and the ideas he has concerning it are really remarkable, and plausible, as well."

At this juncture a wiry-looking man of thirty-five approached the trio, and said:

"Professor, there is something the matter with one of the trunks. There is a peculiar noise coming from it, which is quite incomprehensible to me."

This man was Charlie Reid, who had been engaged to look after the baggage of the trio, and act as a sort of companion. Reid was shrewd-looking and intelligent, and his great hobby was to use all the big words he knew of when addressing anybody. He had been quite a sporting man in his day, so he said, and knew all about bull terriers and game cocks, and the different rules of fighting them.

"Something the matter with one of the trunks?" echoed Professor Lehman. "I don't know what it can be."

"Wouldn't it be an excellent idea to go and see?" asked Reid, in a respectful manner.

"Ahem! Yes, I think it would," and the professor started off, followed by the two boys and Reid.

An examination showed that a model of an electric motor in one of Joe Summers' trunks had, from the shaking up, started

off on its own accord. The noise that came from the trunk resembled that of a buzz-saw, and, as Charlie Reid knew nothing about the contents of the trunks, the noise was incomprehensible to him, as he had stated.

Joe soon put things to rights, and then the three went on deck again, leaving their assistant to stow the baggage in proper shape.

The big steamer was now plowing her way through the Narrows, and the deck was crowded with passengers.

As our three friends glanced about at the passengers, they could not help but notice two men who stood near the rail, gazing at the rapidly receding Staten Island shore.

Both were tall and slim, one being over six feet, and the other about five feet nine inches.

The taller of the two was lame, and carried a heavy cane, which he kept flourishing and pointing at some object they were looking at, greatly to the inconvenience of the passengers who stood near them.

This man was attired in a cheap, though neat looking, sack suit, and wore a straw hat that could not have cost more than fifty cents. The straw hat was the only one to be seen on the deck, as it was well toward the middle of October, and the majority of the people of the North Temperate Zone had long since discarded theirs.

The other man wore a light gray suit, which looked as much out of place as the straw hat, and this was why the pair attracted the particular attention of our friends.

Ben suggested that they walk a little nearer to the rather odd-looking couple, and just as they started to do so something which was really ludicrous happened.

Wishing to draw the attention of his companion to something on the shore, the lame man made a sudden flourish with his cane, and knocked the silk hat of a passenger overboard.

A titter went up from the crowd, and the gentleman who had lost his headgear in such a sudden manner grew just the least bit offended.

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed the lame man with the straw hat. "I didn't mean to do that, my friend. How much did that hat cost?"

He drew a huge roll of bills from his pocket, and pulled out a twenty-dollar note as he spoke.

"Never mind," said the hatless passenger. "I don't want you to pay for the hat. But be a little more careful next time. If you want to swing your cane around, do it when there is no one near you."

"I am sorry," resumed the lame man, still holding the money in his hand. "But, if you won't take any pay for your hat, let's shake hands and be friends. My name is Bill Fisher, and my grandfather was a fisherman. I could buy a high hat to wear myself, but I don't like them. I had my picture taken with one once, and the sight of the picture made me sick every time I looked at it afterward. Better let me pay for your hat."

"Never mind," retorted the passenger, turning away without accepting the proffered hand. "I have more hats in my state-room. We will let the matter drop, if it pleases you."

"All right," and the eccentric individual who called himself Bill Fisher turned to his companion and resumed the conversation from the point where they left off.

"Come, Gus," said he, a few minutes later, "let's see if we can't find something to drink aboard this ship; this salt air makes me thirsty."

As the pair moved off, Ben Mellville exclaimed to his two companions:

"I should like to become acquainted with those two men."

"So would I," returned Joe and the professor in a breath.

They saw no more of the two men that day, but the next morn-

ing, through a very trifling incident, they became acquainted with Bill Fisher and his companion.

While pacing the deck, the lame man's hat was whisked from his head by a sudden gust of wind, and but for the quickness of Ben it would have surely gone overboard; as it was, the boy just caught it as it was going over the rail.

"Jerusalem!" observed Fisher. "She come mighty near going to look for the hat I knocked overboard yesterday. Much obliged to you, boy. I could afford to lose the hat well enough, but I don't want to, as it is the only one I have got with me."

A rather pleasant conversation followed, during which our friends learned that the name of the lame man's companion was Gus Simonson, and that the pair were going to Europe just for the "fun of the thing."

Simonson was the greatest talker of the two, when he once got acquainted, and he entertained our friends with stories of his adventures.

Every time Charlie Reid came around, he would make it his business to get off some "high-flown" remark, and on each occasion Fisher would strike the deck with his cane and utter his favorite exclamation of "Jerusalem!"

During the next two days the six were together nearly all the time, and they began to imagine that they belonged to the same party.

They even went so far as to lay out plans to travel together through Europe.

The steamer's voyage threatened to be a longer one than usual, for she was forced to go many miles out of her course to escape running into the icebergs, which were much thicker than usual.

The fourth night out from New York was a foggy one, and the huge vessel was compelled to go at a slow rate of speed.

All six of our friends made their way forward, to anxiously watch for the appearance of any stray bergs.

"This fog makes me feel uneasy," remarked the professor. "We are liable to run into a berg at any moment, and, if we do—"

"The chances are that some one will get hurt," added Fisher. Then, suddenly pointing his cane before them, he exclaimed:

"Jerusalem! There is one now!"

The words had scarcely left his lips when a shout of alarm left the lips of the lookout. The next instant there was a heavy crash, and the portion of the deck upon which our friends were standing was torn completely away.

There was a violent swaying, and then a perfect avalanche of loosened ice and snow came crashing upon the steamer's deck.

And our friends! They had been hurled overboard!

CHAPTER II.

ADrift ON AN ICEBERG.

Ben Mellville was conscious of receiving a blow from an unknown source, and then his senses left him.

He soon came to, however, and, when he did so, he found himself floundering in the sea.

It was so dark, and the fog was so dense, he could see nothing, but he had enough presence of mind to make some sort of move to preserve his life.

He began swimming with all his might, and after making a few strokes his hands suddenly came in contact with a cold substance, which he knew was ice.

"Great heavens!" he thought, "I am overboard, with nothing to catch hold of but the slippery sides of an iceberg, and the steamer has gone on!"

As he realized the terrible position he was in, the boy became desperate.

He forced his body upward as far as he could, and then strove to clutch hold of the berg.

To his great joy, his fingers seized fast to a projecting piece of ice, and he held himself there for an instant.

Then he slowly dragged himself upward, and a moment later he was resting upon a smooth, flat surface, fully two feet above the water.

Then, for the first time, it occurred to Ben that he ought to shout for help, and he did so.

The echo of his own voice had not died away, when almost at his ear some one said:

"Hello!"

It was the voice of Bill Fisher; Ben recognized it instantly.

"Who are you?" questioned the lame man. "How many of us are here, anyhow?"

"I am, for one," replied the boy, crawling along upon the ice until he reached Fisher's side. "It is I—Ben Mellville."

Just then a groan came from a point very near them.

"Hello!" again shouted Bill Fisher, waving his cane, which he still possessed, notwithstanding the extraordinary mishap that had befallen him.

"Hello!" replied a feeble voice. "Get us out of here, will you? We are all wedged in here in this hole."

"That is Gus Simonson," said Bill Fisher. "Wait till I strike a light, young man, and we'll get him out."

The next moment he scratched a match, and held it before him.

There was no wind, so it burned readily enough, though the fog was so dense that the radius of light did not reach farther than four feet.

"Wait a minute!" cried Ben. "We will be right there."

Bill Fisher lighted another match, and the two made their way in the direction the voice came from.

They had not gone over a dozen steps when, without the least warning, their feet slipped from under them, and they went shooting downward for about ten feet.

As they struck, a concerted yell went up from beneath them.

"Jerusalem!" cried Fisher. "Where in thunder are we? I came mighty near losing my cane that time!"

"There were four of us down here before you came," said the voice of Gus Simonson. "The tumble we had nearly knocked us out, and now you've come down on top of us to finish us."

"You just wait, Gus," coolly returned Fisher, lighting another match. "If we are all here, I am glad of it. When the steamer struck the berg, it was something awful! I went flying about fifty feet in the air, and landed in a heap of snow without hurting myself a bit. Here is Ben Mellville with me, who ain't hurt any to speak of, and, if the rest of you are all right, why, everything is O. K."

"I am all right, I guess," said Joe Summers, from the pile of human beings that had become entangled in the soft snow.

"So am I!" exclaimed Charlie Reid, "but these quarters are rather unpleasant."

Professor Lehman did not speak, but uttered a groan, that was loud and long.

"I guess we had better get out of here," observed Fisher, and, with his cane to assist him, he quickly scrambled up the incline.

The others followed him, one by one, until all but the professor were out upon the level ice.

"He must be hurt," said Simonson. "We will have to get him out."

Ben and Joe slid back into the pit again, and soon had the fat professor upon his feet.

They soon found that none of his bones were broken, and then, with no little difficulty, they got him out.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Simonson.

"Do?" echoed Bill Fisher. "Why, yell like thunder to make them hear us aboard the steamer."

"Maybe she sank after striking the berg," said Ben.

"Or else they haven't missed us, and she has gone right on," added Joe.

"We will try the yell on them and see," returned Fisher.

"Now, when I count three, everybody yell as loud as he can!"

"Help—help!" came in unison from the lips of the six unfortunates.

But only the echo of their own voices came to their ears.

Again they tried it, with the same success.

All hands had hopes of the fog lifting, so they might attract the attention of those on the steamer, if she was still afloat, and bring her back to take them off the berg.

But the fog would not lift.

Hour after hour passed by, until a faint gray light announced the fact that day was approaching.

As it gradually grew lighter, they could see that the berg they had been cast upon in such a miraculous manner was not a very large one.

Yet it had been plenty large enough to save them from drowning.

It covered an area of about a hundred square yards, and a pinnacle in the center went up to the height of many feet.

Strange to say, the only spot where it was possible for a human being to stand or walk was the place where our friends were.

As the sun rose, the fog cleared, and a breeze sprang up from the north.

"Let's get to work and make a raft," said Bill Fisher. "This berg is melting all the time, and, anyhow, we may as well use what wood we have got to float us away from it, instead of burning it up."

"I don't believe there is enough wood here to make a raft big enough to float us," remarked the professor.

"The quicker we leave the berg, the better it will be for us," spoke up Joe. "I have read of icebergs toppling over when they became melted away on the bottom. What if this one should go over?"

"There ain't a sail in sight anywhere, as you all know, and the best thing we can do is to make the raft," spoke up Gus Simonson. "We——"

He did not finish what he was going to say, for a noise in the water attracted the attention of all hands.

A simultaneous cry of astonishment went up from their lips.

And no wonder! Not over a dozen feet from the side of the berg, the most peculiar looking boat they had ever seen was calmly floating on the surface of the sea!

CHAPTER III.

THE SEA WANDERER.

The strange craft that had so suddenly appeared before the eyes of our friends was certainly a very queer-looking object.

It was about ninety feet long and twenty-five feet across its broadest part.

The deck, which was not over a foot above water, sloped forward to a very sharp prow, and aft until it was lost in the water.

Near the bow was a pilot-house, built solely of iron and heavy plate glass, which extended about eighteen inches from the deck. This looked odd enough, but not exactly out of place, though it

was the only thing that broke the graceful sweep of the entire deck.

The general shape of this remarkable boat was that of a fish, as near as our friends could judge from the part that showed above the water, and the hull was composed of iron plates.

As they gazed at it with distended eyes, a door opened just aft of the pilot-house, and the head of a man appeared!

But that was not all! The head was so bloody that it looked as though it had been dipped in a river of gore!

"Jee-rusalem!" cried Bill Fisher, turning pale. "The whole thing must be a spook, boys!"

Petrified with astonishment, not one of his companions made a reply.

A deathly stillness of fifteen seconds followed, and then the bloody head disappeared from the open hatch, just as these words came from it:

"Help me!"

"That ain't no spook, boys!" cried Bill Fisher, regaining his natural color as if by magic. "There is a man who is hurt aboard this queer craft, and he wants us to help him. Come on!"

The fish-like boat had drifted to within four feet of the ice ledge they were standing upon, and the lame man got a good brace with his cane, and then with great agility sprang lightly to the deck.

As quick as a flash, Ben and Joe followed him, and then came Gus Simonson and Charlie Reid, leaving the professor alone upon the iceberg.

He stepped to the edge, and was about to leap after them, when his foot slipped, and he fell into the water, with a loud splash.

But he was fished out the instant he came to the surface and hauled on deck, blowing like a porpoise.

Meantime, Bill Fisher and the two boys made their way down an iron ladder to the interior of the boat.

Lying upon the floor was the man whose head they had seen protruding from the hatchway.

That he was badly wounded they saw at a glance.

The little apartment, which was furnished with a desk and one revolving-chair, showed signs of a struggle having taken place there recently.

"Get some water," cried Fisher, as he pulled off his coat and laid it beneath the man's head in lieu of a pillow. "I'll see what can be done for this poor fellow. I didn't work twenty years in the drug business for nothing."

He had scarcely spoken, when a door opened, and a gigantic negro appeared on the scene.

"If you belong here, get some water," said Ben, turning to the newcomer. "We don't know where it is."

"All right, sah," and the black man darted through the doorway again.

The next minute he appeared with a basin of water and a sponge.

With the dexterity of a surgeon, Bill Fisher washed the blood from the man's head and face, and then administered a dose of brandy from a flask he took from his pocket.

"I am satisfied he can live but a few minutes, but he may come to before he dies," he said.

With folded arms, the giant negro watched our friends as they endeavored to make the wounded man comfortable.

The brandy had no sooner worked its way down the man's throat than he opened his eyes.

"You are strangers," said he, faintly, "but I am glad I came upon you just as I did. There are seven men in a room below, who cannot get out until the iron door is unlocked. I am the owner and captain of this submarine boat, and they mutinied

against me. They have wounded me badly, I guess, but before they were able to slay me I got the best of them by using electricity on them, and forced them into the iron room below. The only one of the crew who stayed by me and fought for me was Samson, the cook, and he was killed by the villains."

"No, he wasn't, captain!" exclaimed the black, rushing forward. "My head was harder den dey thought, an' dey did not kill me. I cum to jist as dese men cum in ter help yer. Here I am, captain; what must I do now?"

"Place yourself under these men," was the reply. "If I die, which I think I will in a very short time, you and they become joint owners of this boat."

As the wounded man spoke, he turned his head so he could see all who were around him, and added:

"Is there any one among you that knows anything about electricity?"

"There is!" exclaimed Joe Summers and the professor, speaking simultaneously.

A faint smile of satisfaction came over the man's face, and he fell back in an exhausted manner.

Bill Fisher produced a small medicine case, such as physicians usually carry in their pockets, and administered a dose of something to the wounded man.

This had the effect of reviving him slightly, but it was quite plain that he had very few minutes to live.

"You—will—find—my—will—in—the—lower left drawer of—"

That was all the dying man could say, and then he fell back unconscious.

Three minutes later he died.

"Gentlemen," said Bill Fisher, in a solemn manner, "I am satisfied that the man who has just died was a square man. He was hurt more inwardly than anywhere else. We have fallen into a peculiar state of circumstances."

"We have," replied the professor.

"De man, who just die was a bery good man," spoke up the negro. "He good to me, an' I like him."

There were tears in his eyes as he spoke, which showed that the black was sincere in what he said.

"Take us in another room, my man, and tell us something about the man who has just died, and his wonderful boat," said Ben, addressing the negro.

"Sure, massa," was the quick reply; "come in here, an' you kin sit down while I talk."

He opened a door, and then all hands followed him into an apartment that was evidently the *salon*, or parlor, of the boat. Fisher covering the face of the dead man with his handkerchief as he did so.

The floor was covered with a Turkish carpet, and soft and easy chairs were scattered about.

It would have been totally dark in the place had it not been for an electric lamp attached to the center of the ceiling, the rays of which made it almost as light as noonday.

"Sit down, massa," said the negro.

They obeyed, and then he told them a rather lengthy story, the substance of which was that the captain, whose name was Gordon, was the inventor and builder of the *Sea Wanderer*, which was the name of the submarine boat.

He had built the strange craft because he liked the sea, and that was all the darky knew about the construction of the boat.

The captain had always been a very peculiar man, he said, and never allowed any of his crew to know the least bit concerning the management of the remarkable craft.

As they received good wages, they did not bother themselves about trying to find out how it was run. They only knew that

it was electricity that caused the vessel to forge ahead and back, and to rise and sink, and that it was the same power that caused the light and warmth aboard.

"I work for Captain Gordon two years," said the black, in conclusion. "He always good to me, an' good to de men who am locked up below. Dere would have been no trouble dis mornin', but de men want de captain to take 'em ashore in some port, an' he would not do it. He say dey can go ashore all dey want on islands where no white people live, but dey say dey would go to New York, an' see dat 'big place. Den dey have fight, an' now de poor captain is dead, an' him have give de *Sea Wanderer* to you gentlemen an' me."

"Yes, he did give us the vessel, but he afterward said that there was a will somewhere. That might change matters," said the professor.

"We will hunt up the will after the poor man is buried," observed Bill Fisher. "I don't believe the boat will be much use to us, anyway. Who is going to run it?"

"Joe and I will be able to do that, I guess," replied the professor. "That is, if there are any of you who know the duties of a pilot."

"I can fill that part of the bill," spoke up Ben. "I was captain of a steam launch all summer, and, therefore, know a trifle about steering a boat."

"And I can give you a hand," added Gus Simonson; "I was mate on a government boat once."

This part of the programme being settled in a manner to suit all hands, Bill Fisher began making preparations to consign the body of the captain to the deep.

Half an hour later this was done, after Professor Lehman had made a prayer, and then Ben Mellville turned his attention to the desk in the room where they found the wounded man.

There was a key in the lock of the lower left drawer, and, as the boy turned it, the drawer opened readily enough.

There were but two articles in it; one was a manuscript book bearing the caption: "Instructions how to run the *Sea Wanderer*, in case I die," and the other was an envelope bearing the inscription: "Last will and testament of Captain G. Gordon."

Ben handed the book of instructions to Joe, and then tore open the envelope containing the will.

There was but one sheet of paper in it, and, unfolding it, the boy read the following:

"Whoever finds this, after my death, whether he or they be friends or foes, shall take possession of this craft, known as the *Sea Wanderer*, and keep her as their own.

"CAPTAIN G. GORDON."

That was all there was of it.

"De boat belongs to us, as de poor captain said," spoke up the negro. "Dere are seven of us who own it, an', though I am one of dem, I would still like to be jist plain Black Samson, de cook!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRUISE IS STARTED.

"Joe, as soon as you learn how to make this craft move, you had better run away from the iceberg," said Bill Fisher.

"De captain always sit in de little room in front of the pilot-house when he make de *Sea Wanderer* go," spoke up Black Samson.

"Very well," returned Joe; "I think I know enough already to start and stop her. Ben, you and Gus take charge of the wheel in the pilot-house, and the professor and I will do the rest."

The negro led the way to the little apartment he spoke of, and

Joe and the professor saw an instrument resembling a piano before them.

There was a keyboard fully two feet six inches in length, and each key, which was about the size of those of a piano, had some peculiar mark on it.

With the manuscript book in his possession, it was very easy for Joe Summers to understand what the peculiar marks meant.

Each stood for something, like the following:

Go ahead; stop; back; increased speed; faster; beneath the surface; to the bottom; to the surface; turn on lights; turn off lights; turn on heat; turn off heat, and so on, taking in everything.

Joe called out to Ben that he was ready, and the moment he received the bell to go ahead he touched the proper key, and the submarine boat started noiselessly through the water.

As soon as they were well out of the way of the iceberg, he stopped her, and then all hands held a consultation.

"The question is just this," spoke up Ben Mellville. "In a very strange manner we have become joint owners of a very wonderful boat, which has no custom-house papers from any port, and which is almost entirely unknown to the world; now, then, what are we going to do with her?"

"Do with her?" echoed Bill Fisher. "Why, Jee-rusalem! we will take a good long cruise in her, of course! This vessel is the finest boat ever built; she can sail under the sea as well as on top. I reckon we can get more solid enjoyment and learn more by taking a six months' cruise in her than we could by traveling all over Europe."

"I agree with Mr. Fisher," spoke up the professor; "but, by making a cruise in this boat, our plans will be upset. Still"—and the learned man scratched his nose in a thoughtful manner—"this *Sea Wanderer* is a marvel, and the man who invented it was more advanced in electricity than any other known man in the world to-day. I am willing to devote a year of my time to learning what he knew!"

"And so am I!" exclaimed Joe Summers.

"I will go with the ones who pay me my wages," said Charlie Reid, quietly.

"And wherever Fisher goes, I'll go," added Gus Simonson.

"We will make it unanimous, then," said Ben. "It is settled that we go on a cruise in the *Sea Wanderer*. But, before we start, there is an important thing to be done. We have seven mutineers confined somewhere beneath us, who, if they got the opportunity, would no doubt slay us for taking their places aboard this wonderful boat."

"We must kill dem fellers!" cried Black Samson, with a gleam of hatred in his eyes. "Dey kill de captain, who was always good to dem, and dey must die!"

"No, we must not kill them," spoke up the professor. "Samson, two wrongs do not make one right, as you ought to know. We will run down to one of the West India islands and put them ashore."

"The very thing!" cried all hands, in unison.

The black did not favor this plan of action, but he gave in to the superior intelligence of the whites, and so it was settled that the mutineers should be fed and cared for until they reached some out of the way island, where they could be set ashore.

Joe and the professor soon learned the mode of taking in a supply of air, and, when they had done so, the prow of the *Sea Wanderer* was turned southward.

It took our friends the whole day to look over the vessel and learn what the various apartments in her were intended for, and, had it not been for Samson's knowledge, they would never have

fully comprehended the entire workings of the greatest marvel of the age.

Everything was replete aboard her, even to a piano, which showed that Captain Gordon had a taste for music, as well as a hobby to travel above and beneath the sea.

Toward night Ben and Bill Fisher went to pay a visit to the mutineers, who were imprisoned in an iron cell adjoining the water apartment of the boat.

Ben unlocked the door, and saw the men crouched upon the floor, with a look that was half scared, half dogged, upon their faces.

"Men, who is your leader?" he asked.

"I am, I guess," returned a raw-boned man, with a red mustache and sandy hair. "I am Jake Sterling, the leader of the mutiny."

"You will step outside, then; we want to talk a little business with you," said Bill Fisher.

Much surprised, the man obeyed.

"If you attempt any funny business, you will be shot down like a dog," added Fisher, as he locked the door of the cell.

"I'm jest as meek as a cow," replied the mutineer. "I'm in for it, an' I suppose I've got ter take my medicine. I don't know how many of you there are aboard, but we could hear you talkin' an' walkin' over our heads."

"There are enough of us to take care of you and your crowd!" exclaimed Ben. "You murdered your captain, and deserve to be killed for it, but we are going to let you off a little easier."

Sterling said nothing, but looked a trifle pleased at this remark.

He was taken into the presence of the rest of our friends, and then told of what was to be done with him and his companions.

"All right," said he; "I suppose we have got to be satisfied."

Four days after leaving the iceberg, the *Sea Wanderer* came in sight of a schooner that was sailing in the same direction as they.

Almost at the same time, Ben sighted a ship's yawl that was floating on the water, upside down.

A sudden idea came in his head.

"Suppose we pick up that boat, and, if it is in good condition, put Jake Sterling and his men in and let the schooner pick them up?" said he.

"A good idea!" exclaimed Bill Fisher; "we will do it."

A few minutes later the boat was picked up, and found to be in good order.

When the *Sea Wanderer* was about a mile from the schooner, the men were brought on deck, at the point of a revolver, and ordered to get into the boat.

Though some of them were armed, they did not deem it good policy to disobey.

One by one they took their places in the boat, and the schooner, observing them and the strange-looking craft near them, at once luffed and made for them.

"Now," said Bill Fisher, "as we haven't been below the surface yet, I think it is about time we tried it."

"I have not the least fear of trying it," replied Joe.

"Down she goes, then!" exclaimed Ben.

An instant later the deck door was shut and secured, and then, with face a trifle pale, Joe Summers pressed the key to descend.

There was the faint sound of rushing water, and then the *Sea Wanderer* sank slowly beneath the surface.

Down, down she went, until finally, with a slight jar, she rested upon the bottom.

The brilliant electric light in the pilot-house made the scene a peculiar, not to say sublime, one.

Hundreds of fishes, of all sizes and shapes, attracted by the bright glare, swam to the windows of the pilot-house, and some of them even thrust their noses against the glass.

When they had remained at the bottom for ten minutes, Joe pressed the key to rise, and up they went like a cork.

As they reached the surface, they saw the schooner in the act of picking up the mutineers, so, having no further business in that section, they started southward at full speed.

It was decided that they should make for the South Pacific Ocean, and, as Black Samson said they had enough provisions on board to last a month, they concluded not to stop anywhere until they reached some island that was uninhabited.

All hands were now completely charmed with the *Sea Wanderer*, and the more they learned about her the better they liked her.

Joe and the professor made themselves fully acquainted with the electrical machinery and batteries, and in two weeks' time both of them had full control over everything pertaining to the workings.

It was about the latter part of November when they came in sight of a pleasant-looking group of islands in the South Pacific, and, as they did not appear to be inhabited, they concluded to go ashore on one of them.

Ben sighted a little creek on one of the largest of the islands, and worked the *Sea Wanderer* slowly along until the mouth of it was entered.

Then the boat glided up a few hundred yards and came to a stop within half a dozen feet of the bank.

It was a very beautiful spot where they proposed to land. As the deck door was thrown open, the rich perfume of wild flowers and rare tropical fruits was wafted to them, while the melodious singing of gayly plumaged birds could be heard on every hand.

"Jee-rusalem!" exclaimed Bill Fisher, as he made his way on deck. "I guess we have struck a sort of paradise!"

Ben followed him, and a moment later the two stood enjoying the beauties of the scene.

But suddenly a startling thing took place.

The singing of the birds was drowned by a loud, fierce yell, and the next instant a score of half-naked savages rushed from the woods and sprang into the water and upon the deck of the *Sea Wanderer*!

Before any of our friends knew what had happened, Ben Melville and Bill Fisher were seized by the savages, and carried off into the woods!

CHAPTER V.

THE MUTINEERS.

Jake Sterling and the six men who had mutinied and slain the captain of the *Sea Wanderer* did not feel in a very pleasant mood when they were ordered into the yawl by our friends.

Perhaps they believed that they had more of a right to the submarine craft than the strangers, but they knew they would surely get the worst of it if they made any resistance, so they left her as quiet as lambs.

There was more or less excitement among the sailors on the deck of the schooner when they were picked up.

They had all seen the strange-looking craft the moment they observed the yawl, and when they suddenly found it had disappeared, they became very curious, indeed.

Jake Sterling told a remarkable story about the submarine boat being a pirate vessel and that they had the choice of having their throats cut or being set adrift.

This story was believed by those on the schooner, and the mu-

tineers were looked upon as very lucky people for having gotten away from such a demon of a craft, after being kept prisoners aboard her so long.

The name of the schooner was the *Event*. She was bound to Valparaiso with a mixed cargo, with Captain Sandpot in charge. "You kin take us there with you," said Sterling, after he had learned the vessel's destination; "we will be glad ter work our passage, and we are all fust-class seamen."

"All right," replied the captain. "I am a little short-handed, anyway."

"You might need a few extra men, too, if that submarine pirate boat took a notion ter tackle ther schooner," added the mutineer leader, with an affected air of uneasiness.

"That's so," rejoined Captain Sandpot; "and we ain't got over half a dozen pistols and one musket aboard."

"I suppose we ought to look up what we have got, clean them up a little, and then distribute them among the men to the best advantage we can," spoke up the mate.

"A good idea," observed Jake Sterling.

This was done later in the day, and the mutineers were given two old-fashioned Colt's revolvers, while the crew of the schooner—eleven, all told—had but four among them.

As Sterling's crowd each had a revolver and ammunition when they came aboard the schooner, they did not need the two extra ones, but they took them, just the same, as though they were entirely without weapons.

The winds were favorable, and the *Event* rounded the Horn without a mishap, or seeing a sign of the submarine boat.

One day, when the vessel was plowing the blue waters of the Pacific, a daring, not to say villainous, scheme came into the head of Jake Sterling.

He concluded to be captain of the schooner!

In order to bring this about, he must start a mutiny.

This was easy enough to do, as far as his men were concerned, and there was a possibility that a portion of the crew would join them.

He no sooner conceived this idea than he put himself at work to carry it out.

"We'll surprise ther captain an' mates, an' give them a show ter sail under my orders, an', if they refuse, they must die. All who are willin' ter have me run ther schooner will be treated like lords. I want ter hunt up the *Sea Wanderer* an' git possession of her. If we do, there'll be a fortune in it for all hands."

This was what Sterling told his men, and it is needless to say they were agreeable to it.

Two nights later, they had an excellent opportunity to execute the vile plot.

It was a calm, peaceful sort of a night, and the captain and the mates happened to be on deck at one time taking in the beauties of the rising moon and star-bedecked sky.

Suddenly they were confronted by Jake Sterling and three of his men, each of whom held a revolver in his hand.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Sterling, in a tone that was slow and easy, but full of meaning, "I've come ter the conclusion that I want ter be captain of this schooner!"

The vessel's officers were taken completely by surprise, and all they could do was to stare at the villain in mute amazement.

"If you want ter sail under me, an' join us in a money-makin' business, you are welcome; an', if not, you kin have your choice of bein' shot down as you stand, or light out for yerselves in one of ther boats," went on the villain.

"What do you mean?" cried the captain, as soon as he could regain the use of his tongue. "This is mutiny!"

"I know it is," was the calm rejoinder. "It ain't ther fust

mutiny we've been in, either. We are all well armed, an' mean business; what do you say?"

"What do I say!" exclaimed the captain, becoming excited in an instant. "I say that I will never submit to you!"

He endeavored to draw a pistol from his hip-pocket, but at that moment Jake Sterling's revolver cracked, and Captain Sandpot fell to the deck, with a bullet in his heart!

Then, in the twinkling of an eye, the mates were seized and thrown to the deck.

A shout from the forecabin was heard, and the crew came rushing aft to learn what had caused the shot.

They were met by two of the mutineers, who, with revolvers in each hand, commanded them to halt and hear what Jake Sterling had to say to them.

As soon as the two mates had been securely bound, the villain stepped forward and addressed the sailors.

He told them what an easy life they would have if they cast their fortunes with him, and what vast sums of money they would make.

"You want ter decide putty quick," he added, significantly. "Your captain is dead, an' if you don't know what is good for you, some of you will follow him mighty soon. Me an' my men are armed to the teeth, an' we mean business!"

That settled it. The majority of the crew were men who were hardened to all phases of life, and they one and all gave in to the mutineers, and promised to obey their new captain.

An hour later everything was satisfactorily arranged. Sterling appointed one of his own men as first mate, and the boatswain of the schooner second mate.

A vote was then taken to decide what was to be done with the former mates, and by a large majority it was settled that they should remain aboard as prisoners until a favorable opportunity to set them ashore came.

The body of Captain Sandpot was consigned to the deep, and the course of the *Event* changed until her prow pointed to north-west.

Then a quadruple allowance of grog was served, and everybody became very happy, save the prisoners in the hold.

When he had liquor in him, Jake Sterling's tongue became very loose, and he began telling his crew a wonderful story about a group of small islands, not many hundred miles distant, where marvelous things were to be seen.

He had visited the islands once while aboard the submarine boat, he said, and, as he was a pretty fair navigator, he had made a chart of them, unknown to anybody but himself.

Consequently, he would take the schooner there, and show his men the most wonderful sights they had ever witnessed, and at the same time make them as rich as princes from the precious stones that were to be found on the islands.

"Then," he added, "the people aboard the *Sea Wanderer* will most likely find the chart of the islands, and, if they do, they will surely visit them. This will give us a chance to get possession of the greatest boat in the world, which belongs to us as much as it does to them."

A rousing cheer followed the new captain's words, and at that moment there was not a man who was not willing to stick to him.

CHAPTER VI.

IN A TIGHT PLACE.

Our friends aboard the *Sea Wanderer* were almost paralyzed with astonishment when they saw the half-naked savages seize Ben Melville and Bill Fisher and carry them off into the forest.

"Great Scott!" cried Gus Simonson, "if Bill don't lose his cane

now, he'll stand a little show with the blacks. He is a regular nation when he starts in with that cane of his."

"We must go ashore and help them!" exclaimed Joe Summers. "Come!"

The boy was about to dart upon the deck, when a much larger crowd of savages than had carried off Ben and Fisher suddenly appeared on the scene.

Brandishing spears and yelling like demons, they rushed toward the submarine boat.

Joe had presence of mind enough to close the deck door, and then, not knowing what else to do, the party watched the savages from the pilot-house.

"Me get guns!" said Samson, the cook.

"That's so!" ejaculated the professor. "Hurry up! There are loopholes just beneath the glass in the pilot-house."

The next minute the negro appeared with half a dozen Winchester rifles, and Gus Simonson, pressing a little spring, caused a metal band to slide upward, and the loopholes were revealed.

Meantime, the savages had halted upon the bank of the stream, and were chattering like so many monkeys.

Presently they ceased, and then, with a yell, attempted to get aboard the deck of the *Sea Wanderer*.

It was then that our friends opened fire upon them, with such telling effect that they immediately drew back.

But, instead of causing them to leave the spot, the noise of the firing brought a fresh supply of the savages to the scene.

They kept at the edge of the woods for a few minutes, and then once more made a rush for the deck of the submarine boat.

The Winchesters of our friends cracked in rapid succession, and, though many of them fell, over a score of the black demons reached the deck of the boat.

"Back her off, Joe!" cried Simonson, as he seized the wheel. "If we don't look out, they will smash the glass in the windows, as thick as it is!"

"You are right," replied Charlie Reid, as he shot one of the savages, and caused him to roll from the deck into the water; "these are the most persistent fellows I ever saw, and their fiendishness is unparalleled!"

Joe took his place at the keyboard, and the next instant the *Sea Wanderer* began moving toward the center of the stream, the savages still retaining their positions on the deck.

"Sink her, if it is deep enough!" said Gus Simonson; and then, as the rifles were pulled in, he closed the loopholes.

Then something happened that really astonished the dark-skinned barbarians.

The boat suddenly sank from under them, and left them struggling in the water!

But the water was only deep enough to allow the craft to go about two feet below the surface, so it was necessary to back toward the mouth of the stream.

The electric light was turned on, and away they went.

When they were about a hundred yards from the shore of the island, Joe pressed the proper key, and the *Sea Wanderer* arose to the surface.

From the pilot-house the savages could be observed running wildly up and down the bank of the stream, but no signs of Ben or Bill Fisher could be seen.

"What are we going to do now?" asked the professor, anxiously.

"Two of our number are in the hands of savages, and they must be rescued," replied Joe, in determined tones.

"You are right!" exclaimed Gus Simonson; "but will some one tell us how we are going to rescue them?"

"I would like to offer a suggestion," spoke up Reid. "Now,

then, in the first place, we will assume that both Ben and Bill are alive, and in the hands of these savages. Now, then——"

"Charlie, I am afraid we will lose too much time if we wait till you get through making your suggestion," interrupted Joe. "We have no time to lose; our companions may be in danger of their lives at this moment. We must go to their assistance at once!"

At this juncture, Black Samson, the cook, thrust his head in the pilot-house.

"If you please, massas," said he, "I t'ink you kin run de *Sea Wanderer* up dat stream under water. I have been to dis place before, dough I did not recognize de islands at fust. De stream run under de ground a little way up, an' come out in a lake right by de village of dem savages. Dese islands are what de dead captain called Satan's Islands, if I am not mistaken."

"Let us try it, then!" cried Simonson. "If Samson is right, we will give the black fiends a surprise in their own village, and then run ashore and rescue Ben and Fisher."

There was a strong possibility of the darky being wrong, as small groups of islands in the South Pacific are numerous, and bear a great resemblance to each other; but, anyhow, they decided to do as he said.

Accordingly, they went below the surface and made for the stream again.

Joe was forced to go slowly, for fear of running aground, but they found, as they proceeded up the creek, that there was enough water.

When about half a mile was passed, Gus Simonson saw the subterranean passage Black Samson had spoken of, not far ahead of them.

"Hurrah!" he exclaimed. "Samson was not mistaken in the islands; I see the passage that will take us to the lake."

"Keep her steady, and look out for rocks as we go through," said Joe, with his fingers on the keyboard, ready to stop or back the vessel at an instant's notice.

"Never fear," was Simonson's reply; and then the *Sea Wanderer's* prow entered the tunnel-like passage.

It was so straight and regular that there was not the least trouble in steering the boat through, though the tide, which was flowing toward the ocean, was pretty strong.

In less than five minutes they emerged from the passage, and, calling Samson to his side, Gus Simonson asked how far they must go before they reached the savage village on the shore of the lake.

"Steer to de left for about two hundred yards, an' when de bow strikes de slopin' bottom let her go up; den we will be right dere," replied the darky.

Simonson endeavored to obey these instructions to the very letter, but before they had covered half the hundred yards the sharp prow of the submarine boat ran plump into a perpendicular bank of soft mud!

If Simonson had not got a little "rattled" he could have avoided the accident, but, seeing the bank right ahead of him, he became so excited that he gave Joe the signal to put on more speed, instead of to stop and back.

As it was, they did not come to a standstill until fully twelve feet of the vessel's bow was buried in the mud!

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Gus Simonson. "I made a bad mistake that time. But I guess she will back off all right."

"I make a mistake, too, when I say go to de right," spoke up Samson. "I should hab say go straight ahead."

"We will try to go straight back," observed Joe. "Are you ready, Gus?"

"Yes."

The young electrician pressed the proper key, and the wheel thrashed the water in the usual manner.

But the vessel did not move an inch!

An expression of uneasiness came over Joe's face.

"Can it be possible that the boat has become wedged in the bank so tightly that we cannot free her?" he thought.

Then he put on more power, and the *Sea Wanderer* began to tremble under the strain, though she did not glide back the width of a hair.

A cold sweat broke out upon the boy, and, rising from his seat in front of the keyboard, he exclaimed:

"What can be the matter?"

"We are caught in a trap, it seems," spoke up the professor, in a voice that trembled slightly.

"And we have only got air enough to last us three hours," added Charlie Reid, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"It am all my fault!" groaned Black Samson. "I should hab say go straight ahead, slow."

"No; it is my fault," said Simonson. "I should not have allowed myself to get rattled. If Ben Melville had been at the wheel, this thing would not have happened."

"Never mind whose fault it is," cried Joe. "We are in a scrape, and we must find a way to get out of it."

A deathly silence followed the boy's words.

But a few seconds later it was broken by Charlie Reid.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed he, "what are the diving suits in the room next to the searoom for?"

CHAPTER VII.

BILL FISHER'S CAVE.

We must now turn our attention to Ben Melville and Bill Fisher, who were seized by the savages in such an unexpected manner.

The dusky hands that grabbed them pinioned their arms to their sides in such a way that they were unable to help themselves, and away they were hustled through the bushes.

Fisher clung to his cane as though it were a part of his body, and for some strange reason his captors did not offer to take it from him.

Once into the shadow of the woods, the dusky natives came upon a beaten path, and, the moment they reached this, they darted along faster than ever.

For ten minutes they ran along swiftly, and then a sort of natural clearing, with a good-sized lake in the center, was reached.

Then Ben and Fisher were deposited upon the ground, with their backs to a couple of trees, to which they were tied securely about the waist.

This was no sooner done than their captors removed their weapons, which consisted of a revolver and a knife each, though they still allowed Fisher to keep his cane.

It was evident that they were aware of his lameness, for one of them pointed to his leg, and said something to the men who were tying him to the tree.

The consequence was that Fisher was handled much more gently than Ben.

Neither of the captives spoke a word until the savages drew back, after tying them to the trees.

Then Bill Fisher broke out with:

"Jee-rusalem! Ben, they didn't kill us, did they?"

"No," replied the boy; "but the chances are they will after a while. I had no idea there were such savage people on the South Sea Islands in these days. I hope they are not cannibals."

"They kill me, I don't care whether they eat me or not," said

Fisher, "so it makes no difference to me if they are cannibals. One thing I am mighty glad of is that they did not take my cane."

"I don't think your cane will do you any good while you are tied to that tree."

"It won't, eh? You don't know what kind of a cane this is. It looks like the commonest sort of a stick, but it cost a hundred dollars to have it made."

Ben looked at his companion in an incredulous manner.

"I'll show you what the cane is good for the first time any of the black rascals try to cut up any monkey-shines with us. I reckon that, before they kill us, my cane will put an end to a dozen or so of the wild niggers!" went on Fisher.

In spite of his perilous situation, Ben began to grow interested in Fisher's cane.

It appeared to be nothing more than a hickory stick, with a bent handle, and a steel ferrule about three inches long on the end of it.

And yet the lame man said he paid a hundred dollars to have it made!

It suddenly struck Ben that, perhaps, there was a sword blade hidden in it, which would come out at the touch of a spring.

He asked Fisher about it, but that worthy said it was something worse than a sword cane.

"What is it, then?" questioned Ben.

"It is a first-class air rifle," retorted Fisher. "Now you know all about it. I can kill anything I point it at, if it ain't more than thirty yards off. I never could hit anything with a gun, so I had this wonderful cane made, and I've practiced with it considerably. Pretty soon I'll show you what I can do with it, for I am going to drop one of them fellows over there that has got the fancy-colored feathers in his hair, just for the fun of the thing. By that time our friends may get up here and rout this black gang."

The captive pair now turned their attention to their surroundings.

They saw that they were in the midst of a collection of dirty huts, which were scattered about regardless of any regularity.

Fisher remarked that they looked like a lot of haystacks that had been raked and cocked by a drunken farmhand.

There were very few trees in the village—if it could be called a village, for it looked more like a camp—and the ground, which was of a sandy nature, sloped gently to the shores of the lake.

Ben counted nearly a hundred of the huts, and, estimating the huts to be occupied by five people each, the population of the place must be nearly five hundred, about two hundred of which were men and well-grown boys.

When he came to think about it, the boy made up his mind that it would be a very difficult job for their friends aboard the *Sea Wanderer* to rescue them.

The savages were all well armed with spears and heavy clubs, which they evidently knew how to use.

Then, again, they appeared to be very powerful fellows, and they had shown themselves quite courageous in darting upon the deck of the submarine boat and carrying off the two whites.

While these thoughts were passing through Ben's mind, his attention was suddenly attracted to a group of the natives, not far distant, who had been engaged in watching something that was roasting over a fire.

He saw one of their number lying on his back, and the rest running about him in a manner of great excitement.

"Did you see that?" asked Bill Fisher, in a low tone. "I plugged that fellow just as nice as you please, and the rest of them can't imagine what killed him. That is one less we have got to worry about."

Ben was much mystified. He had not heard even a slight click, and yet the lame man claimed to have shot the native with his wonderful cane.

"No, I didn't see it," said he, after a pause. "I was looking in another direction."

"Well, in about ten minutes I'll plug another. I'll let you know when I am going to do it."

By this time a crowd had gathered about the dead savage—for he was certainly dead—and an animated discussion took place.

At the end of five minutes the body of the black victim of Fisher's cane was picked up and carried away, and that ended it for the present.

Shortly after this, a native came toward the captives, with a sort of earthen dish containing a quantity of smoking meat.

To the surprise of our two friends, he spoke to them in broken English.

"Here some meats for white fools; um eat an' git fat, den we kill and eat," said he, with a grin.

"You think so, eh?" exclaimed Bill Fisher. "What sort of meat is this?"

"Dat nice piece of black man, dat die last night wif um fever," returned the native, grinning more than ever.

A feeling of horror came over Ben.

The natives were cannibals, after all, and they were going to force them to eat the flesh of a human being who had died with the fever!

The thought of such a thing made the boy's stomach quail within him, and he became faint with a feeling of nausea.

But Bill Fisher was equal to the occasion.

"You take that meat right back," said he. "We will never get fat from eating that, because it will make us sick. If you don't do it, I'll call on the spirit of the white man to kill you in your tracks!"

"Um white fools," retorted the black, "got to eat de meat!"

Quite a crowd of the natives had gathered about by this time, and, with grins on their ugly faces, they waited to see the whites forced to eat the meat, which they knew was sickening to them.

The black now advanced upon Ben, with the intention of forcing some of the contents of the dish in his mouth.

But the next instant Fisher pointed his cane at the fellow, and he dropped to the ground, dead!

It happened so suddenly that not one of the natives who were looking on had an idea that it was the lame man who had caused their companion's death, and, nearly frightened out of their wits, they gazed upon the corpse before them.

And Ben, who had witnessed the occurrence, was almost as much surprised as they.

A minute later a big crowd of the natives had gathered about the spot, and, noticing that their superstitious nature was fully aroused, Bill Fisher shouted at the top of his voice:

"The spirit of the white men is angry with you! If you don't let us go back to our boat, you will die the same as that man did!"

Quite a number of the natives could understand English, and they quickly translated this to their companions.

The result was that they drew back to a sort of square in front of the king's hut to decide upon what was to be done.

The king came out to join in the consultation, and, when he heard what had occurred, he seized an ugly-looking knife and started for the captives.

"Me no 'fraid of um white spirit!" he exclaimed, brandishing his knife fiercely at Ben and Bill Fisher. "Me King Pantan, an' me 'fraid no one! Me cut um white men's throats right away!"

He meant to do just as he said, but Fisher was determined he

should not, so he quickly leveled his cane and pressed the spring to discharge it.

It went off all right, but the bullet, instead of slaying the cannibal king, struck the blade of his knife, and knocked it from his hand!

But, as it turned out, this was better than killing him, for he uttered a yell of terror, and, hastily ordering the captives to be set free, he ran for his hut with the speed of the wind, thinking that it was really the white spirit who had interfered.

In a very short time Ben and Fisher were released from the trees by the trembling blacks, and they lost no time in moving from the spot.

CHAPTER VIII.

REID'S REMARKABLE EXPLOIT.

As Charlie Reid spoke of the diving suits, the faces of his friends lighted up as though by magic.

"Dat am so!" exclaimed Black Samson. "De poor captain very often put a suit on, an' go out, an' walk on de bottom. I had one on myself once. Dere am a sack on be dack ob each one, which carry enough air to last an hour. Dere are six suits, so we kin put some ob 'em on, an' go out an' dig de bow ob de boat out ob de mud. Come on; I will show you how dey are put on."

All hands followed the darky to the apartment where the suits were kept.

It was decided that Joe, Gus Simonson, and Charlie Reid should go outside and see what could be done, while the professor and Samson remained in charge of the vessel.

It took the three fully fifteen minutes to get the suits on, and, when they did so, they felt weighted down so that they could scarcely walk.

When everything was in readiness, the professor and the darky left the apartment and closed the door securely.

Then, taking his place at the keyboard, the professor caused the door of the searoom to open, and the water flooded in upon the three in the suits.

The moment the commotion had subsided, they stepped through the door into the searoom, and thence out upon the bottom of the lake.

They found they could move along comparatively easy.

Though breathing was a trifle difficult at first, they soon got used to it, and, each carrying a broad-bladed instrument resembling a lance, they made their way toward the bow.

The electric light in the pilot-house made plenty of light for them, and they were soon digging away in the soft mud.

For half an hour they worked away, and then Joe signaled to his companions that he thought the vessel could be gotten out easily now.

So they made their way back into the searoom, and Joe pressed a button which informed the professor that they were waiting to come inside.

Then they stepped into the adjoining room, and closed the door.

The pump began to work a moment later, and the water was gradually forced out through an opening that was covered by a suction valve.

In less than ten minutes the room was clear, and the three removed their helmets.

Samson came to see if they were all right, and Joe told him to tell the professor to see if he could back out of the mud yet.

If he could not, they were ready to don the helmets again, and do some more digging.

The instant the professor pressed the key to back they felt a throbbing that fairly shook the vessel from stem to stern, and then she slowly glided away from the mudbank.

"Hurrah!" cried Gus Simonson. "We are saved!"

"Let us get off our suits and go to the surface!" exclaimed Joe. "Ben and Bill Fisher may need our assistance the worst way."

"Wait!" interposed Charlie Reid. "I've got what I call a brilliant idea, and with your permission I will carry it out."

"Hurry and tell us what it is, then," returned Joe.

"I propose to put on the helmet again, and walk upon the bottom to the shore of the lake. My appearance in this rig will frighten the savages out of their wits, and just about that time you can come to the surface and make for the shore. Between the lot of us, we ought to be able to rescue Ben and Fisher."

"Your idea is an excellent one," said Joe; "but by carrying it out you will run a great risk. However, if you insist upon it, I am willing."

"I would like to do it," was the reply.

"Very well, then; we will allow you ten minutes, and then we will rise to the surface and make for the shore."

With these words, the boy lifted the helmet, and Simonson assisted him to fit it to the collar of Reid's suit.

When it was properly adjusted, they left the apartment, and the next moment the water flowed in again.

Reid, who possessed more courage and energy than the average man, boldly stepped out upon the bottom, and then, coming to a halt, looked about him to see where the bottom sloped upward.

By aid of the light in the pilot-house, he soon located the proper course for him to pursue, and then, waving his hand at those who were watching him from the window, he started forward.

He carried nothing but the lancelike implement, which would make a very dangerous weapon in case he was attacked, and, without the least sign of fear, kept on his way.

When he had passed around the mud bank the ascent became quite steep, and he knew he would soon emerge from the water.

In exactly eight minutes from the time he left the sea room of the submarine boat, his head came above the surface.

He could see very well through the glass front of his helmet, and, much to his satisfaction, he found he was right in the village of the savages.

He saw a large crowd of natives gathered in one spot, and, thinking it was there the captives must be, he crawled up the bank, and, waving his weapon in a threatening manner, started toward them.

The instant the eyes of the savages fell upon him, a prolonged howl of fear left their lips.

But two minutes before his remarkable appearance they had liberated their captives, because they feared the white spirit would kill them all if they did not, and now the strangest looking being they had ever seen had emerged from the depths of the lake and was coming toward them in a threatening manner.

Though Charlie Reid could not hear the cries that went up from the crowd, he could see that they were nearly frightened out of their wits, and he enjoyed the scene immensely.

But the extreme weight of the diving suit was telling on him, and he soon comprehended that it would be an utter impossibility for him to get to the spot where the savages were congregated.

This conviction no sooner came upon him than, by an unlucky misstep, he stumbled and fell to the ground.

He strove to scramble to his feet, but to save his life he could not do so. The lead breast-plate and heavy helmet weighted him down, and, being well-nigh exhausted, he could not get his head two feet above the ground.

He began kicking and scrambling about in such a ludicrous manner that their fright suddenly left the savages, and, comprehending the helplessness of their curious-looking visitor, they ventured toward him to investigate.

The nearer they got to him the more comical Reid's movements became.

At length half a dozen of the savages plucked up sufficient courage to attack him, and with extended spears they rushed upon the helpless man in the diving-suit.

CHAPTER IX.

A NOVEL WAY TO SAVE A LIFE.

It was a ridiculous, not to say dangerous, position that Charlie Reid was placed in.

He saw the savages coming toward him, but, being unable to get upon his feet, he could not even make a show of defending himself with the lance he carried.

The natives began to circle about him with leveled spears. It was plain that they were a little afraid of the curious-looking man writhing on the ground.

But at length one fellow, who was more bold than the rest, advanced and took hold of Reid's leg.

The moment he felt himself touched Reid made a violent kick with his foot, and the lead sole of his shoe struck the black in the face with such force as to send him unconscious on his back.

This seemed to satisfy the savages the man was nothing more than human, and it angered them as well. Dispensing with all caution, they rushed upon the unlucky man in the diving-suit and held him flat upon his back so he was unable to move.

For five minutes they kept him thus, and then, becoming satisfied that he was really fully in their power, they let up on him, and pointing their spears at him, motioned him to rise to his feet.

Not knowing what else to do, and becoming aware of the fact that the air he was breathing was getting pretty thin, Reid began unscrewing his helmet.

Observing this movement, an intelligent look came over the face of one of the blacks, and he immediately gave the prisoner some assistance.

The result was that half a minute later the helmet was removed, and Charlie Reid was breathing the pure air of heaven in the midst of a gang of uncivilized black men!

"Huh!" exclaimed one of the natives, as he gazed at Reid's face; "him nothin' but a white man in um funny clothes. We take um clothes off an' tie to a tree; white spirit no care 'bout dis one."

"You had better not bother about me," said Charlie Reid; "I come from the bottom of the lake, and if I yell out, about a thousand of my friends will come out and give you fellows the worst beating you ever had!"

The savage who had first spoken grinned.

"If um friends come out of lake like you did dey no gib us much beatin'," observed he.

"Go on, an' call um friends from bottom of um lake," spoke up the king, who, finding that there was nothing to fear, had approached the spot.

This was a trifle more than Reid had expected. He had tried to frighten the natives into setting him free by threatening to call a host of imaginary friends to his assistance, and now he was told to go on and call them.

"I'll wait a while before I call them," said he, not knowing what else to say.

A laugh went up from those of the blacks who could understand him.

When this had subsided the king ordered that the prisoner should be brought to his hut, and his curious suit of clothes removed.

This was done, in spite of anything Reid did to the contrary, and ten minutes later he was tied to a tree a few feet from the door of the royal dwelling, attired in his usual garments.

The dusky ruler of the natives took possession of the diving-suit, evidently thinking it was a great prize, and suspended it from a pole in the center of his hut.

Shortly after daylight the captive fell into a doze.

From this he drifted into a sound slumber, from which he was aroused an hour later by a couple of savages, who brought his breakfast to him.

"See here," exclaimed Reid, "what do you fellows intend to do with me, anyhow?"

"Kill an' eat," replied one of them. "Um not bery fat, but um make fine meal."

As has been said, there was nothing cowardly about Charlie Reid, but this assertion made him feel anything but comfortable.

However, he forced a laugh, and said:

"I don't think any of you people will ever eat me. You dare not kill me; you will be struck dead the moment you attempt it."

He said this without knowing anything of what had taken place a short time before his capture—in fact, he knew nothing about Bill Fisher's wonderful cane; and it was merely a bluff on his part to frighten the savages from slaying him.

But he saw that his words made a deep effect upon the blacks, and he concluded to follow up his advantage.

"I belong to a class of people who will not be killed by blacks," he went on. "If your king don't believe it, let him try to kill me. But I guarantee that the moment he gives the order he will drop dead!"

"Me tell um king what you say," spoke up the native who could understand English; "most likely him come an' talk with you."

The fellow was as good as his word, for, after he went away with the remains of Reid's breakfast, he told the king just what the prisoner had said.

It so happened that this was to be a sort of gala day with the natives, and in order to be prepared for the sport that was to take place, the king had commenced at daylight to get in a good humor by drinking copious draughts of cocoanut juice, that had been left long enough in the shells to ferment.

The consequence was that, when he received the word, he was just about enough under the influence of the stuff he had imbibed to be contrary.

So he declared then and there that Reid should be killed by one of his wives, and that the execution should be the second event of the day's sport.

Half an hour later the prisoner was brought from the hut, and tied to the same tree he had been bound to the day before.

Then one of the natives informed him that a grand cock-fight was going to take place, and that immediately following that he was to have his head split in twain by a sharp hatchet in the hands of the king's favorite wife.

This news did not make Reid feel any more comfortable, but he became interested in spite of himself.

"A cock-fight?" he asked. "Why, do you people know anything about fighting roosters?"

"Sure!" returned the black, with a grin; "dat um favorite sport here."

"Great Scott!" returned the captive; "I used to be away up in

that business myself, but I came to the conclusion that it was too cruel, so I gave it up. Can I see the fight, Mr. Blackie?"

"Um take place right in front ob you," was the reply. "If you keep your eyes open you see um, sure."

Reid said no more, but turned his attention to a number of the native women, who at that moment approached, each one carrying a bird of the pheasant species.

They were all cocks, and they resembled the game fowl for all the world.

When the women came to a halt in the center of the open square a number of drums were beaten, and the savages began to collect about the spot.

At the same instant the cocks started crowing, and this caused the savage crowd to utter a cheer in their wild way.

Unlike the sports of civilization, the savages did not place steel gaffs upon the birds, but allowed them to fight only with the weapons nature had provided for them.

Some of the cocks had spurs two inches long, and they were very sharp at the extremities.

When the crowd had gathered about in a huge circle the king came from his hut and took a seat on an oil barrel that had been picked up on the beach at some time, and was utilized by the dusky ruler as a sort of private box on all gala occasions.

Then he ordered the women to proceed with the entertainment.

Two of the pheasant cocks were tossed upon the ground, and they immediately went at it in a savage manner, which showed that the birds were of a very vicious nature.

The fight did not last over three minutes, as one of the cocks got spurred through the neck and gave up the ghost.

"A very good fight," muttered Reid, who had forgotten the fact, for the time, that he was to be killed as soon as the fights between the roosters were over.

The next "go" was between two splendid specimens of the genuine wild pheasant cocks. One of them was the most beautiful fowl that Reid had ever seen. His plumage was a mixture of scarlet, gold, green and black, and his carriage was perfect.

"By Jove!" thought the captive, "I would like to own that bird, just to make a pet of him."

Sometimes a person's wishes are granted in an unexpected manner, and this was the case with Charlie Reid, as will be seen.

The king gave the word, and the women plucked the two birds on the ground.

But, instead of fighting, Charlie Reid's favorite uttered a frightened cackle and made a desperate effort to get away.

A howl of derision went up from the natives who were backing the other fowl, and then the frightened cock was caught and tried again.

But the same result followed.

"One more trial," exclaimed the king; "and then if he does not fight he shall be killed along with the white prisoner, and I will have a sauce made from the livers of both."

As this was spoken in the native tongue, Reid, of course, could not understand it, but by the glances that were shot at him, he knew that he was the subject of the king's remarks.

Once more the beautifully-plumaged bird was caught, and again it was faced to its antagonist.

But the moment the native woman released it the bird uttered a series of squawks and flew directly to Charlie Reid!

As his hands were free the prisoner promptly seized the frightened cock and began caressing it.

The moment he began doing this the pretty fowl elevated its head and tail and otherwise showed signs of returning courage.

There was no one who noticed this as soon as Reid, and acting on a sudden impulse, the captive man cried out to the king:

"I can make this bird fight. Release me, and I guarantee that I will make him kill all you have there!"

This remark pleased the king and his subjects immensely, and, getting down from his barrel, he walked over to Reid, and said:

"Um white man must be putty smart; if him make bird fight an' kill odder birds him kin go free an' take bird wif him."

A thrill of joy shot through the captive. Here was a chance to save his life, and he meant to profit by it.

"Untie me and I'll do as I say," he exclaimed.

At a word from their ruler one of the blacks cut the thongs that bound him to the tree, and Reid arose to his feet, still caressing the pheasant cock.

"Go an' make coward bird fight!" commanded the dusky monarch.

"I am ready; bring on your birds!"

As Reid made this remark he began tossing his bird in order to limber his joints.

The next minute a woman faced him with the same cock the frightened one had refused to fight.

Reid made a few mysterious movements, and then let his bird go.

To the surprise of the savages, the cock flew into his opponent like a demon and cut him down at the second fly he made.

"Bring on another!" cried the man, who was working to save his life in such a novel manner.

Another was produced, and in less than a minute Reid's cock killed it.

Another and another followed, and each one met its death in very short order.

And so it kept on until the remarkable bird Reid handled was the only one left alive.

"I suppose I can go now," said he, as he picked up the bird and wiped the blood from its bill and spurs. "Good-day, Mr. King; I'll see you later."

He was about to make for the shore of the lake to hunt up the *Sea Wanderer* when the savage king stopped him.

"Um change my mind," said he. "Um birds all dead, and now um white fool must die anyhow!"

The words had scarcely left his lips when he threw up his hands and fell to the ground in the throes of death.

CHAPTER X.

BEN AND BILL FISHER FIND REID.

Ben Mellville and Bill Fisher lost no time in getting away from the village of the savages the moment they were set at liberty.

They followed a path through the bushes, and in a minute or two came in sight of the lake.

"I wonder where we are, anyhow?" observed Ben, "and what has become of the *Sea Wanderer*?"

"I thought this was the path the blacks brought us over; but it can't be, for this goes directly to that lake. I guess—Jerusalem! look there, Ben!"

No wonder Fisher appeared excited, for just at that moment the *Sea Wanderer* arose to the surface of the lake not a dozen yards from the shore!

Ben was nearly rendered speechless at the sudden appearance of the submarine boat, and for a few seconds he stood stock still in his tracks.

"Come on!" exclaimed his companion! "our boat has come

after us, so we might as well hurry up and get aboard before the blacks change their minds."

The two now hurried for the shore, Fisher keeping up a remarkable gait in spite of his lameness.

That they were seen by those aboard was plainly evident, for the nose of the submarine boat was immediately forced to within five feet of the shore.

Then Gus Simonson and the professor came out on the dock, and with shouts of welcome bade them to hurry and come aboard.

Ben and Fisher were not slow in doing this, and two minutes later they were safely aboard the wonderful craft.

Joe Summers promptly set the machinery in motion, and the *Sea Wanderer* backed off in the direction of the center of the lake.

"Now, then, we must hunt up Charlie Reid," observed Joe.

"Why, isn't he with you?" asked Ben.

"No; he started to walk along the bottom in his diving-suit to the shore, and give the savages a scare, and we were to follow him up and make an effort to rescue you."

"And the plan did not work?"

"It did not. Something got the matter with the machinery, and we were unable to rise to the surface until the moment you saw us. We don't know whether he is at the bottom yet, or whether he has reached the shore and fallen in the hands of the savages."

"Sort of a queer case—this," observed Fisher. "Suppose we go to the bottom and see if he is there?"

This proposition was favorably received by all hands, and the boat was accordingly sunk.

But though they turned on the strongest light they had and searched all over, Reid could not be found.

"He must have reached the shore," said Ben, at length.

"We will go up and look for him then," returned Joe. "It was rather foolish in him going out with the diving-suit on, anyway."

"Charlie Reid is capable of doing very foolish things sometimes," spoke up the professor. "He meant well enough, but the chances are that he is either dead, or in the hands of the savages."

"And if the latter is the case, we must rescue him," said Bill Fisher. "My cane got Ben and myself free, and the chances are it will rescue Reid."

As they made their way to the surface, Ben related how they came to escape from the savages.

As Gus Simonson was the only person who had known that Fisher's cane was an air-rifle in disguise, the rest were pretty well astonished.

But they were astonished still further a moment later when the submarine boat ceased to rise, with a bump that threw them off their feet.

All hands quickly sprang to their feet and looked out of the window of the pilot-house.

By aid of the powerful electric light, they could see what had stopped their ascent.

While near the bottom the *Sea Wanderer* had drifted into a sort of subterranean passage, not unlike the one by which they had entered the lake.

The moment they comprehended this, Joe and Ben, who was now at the wheel, quickly righted the vessel.

Then the button was pressed to back out.

But, to the dismay of those on board, they could not make an inch of progress in a backward direction. A strange, powerful current was bearing them on instead!

"What is the matter—tide too strong to go against?" asked Bill Fisher.

"Yes, that is just what is the matter," replied Ben.

"She won't go back?"

"No."

"Let her go ahead then, and we will come back when the tide turns."

There was logic in this, so Ben gave the signal for Joe to stop the machinery, and, on the lookout for danger, he held the wheel as steady as a clock, while the *Sea Wanderer* drifted swiftly through the tunnel-like passage.

For ten minutes she drifted along, and then Joe strove to rise to the surface again.

This time he was successful, but instead of rising into the light of day they came up into a broad cavern.

"I know where we is!" exclaimed Black Samson, the moment he saw what sort of a place they were in. "De *Sea Wanderer* has been in dis cavern afore. Dere is a strong tide dat runs in here, an' you can't git out ag'in till it runs de odder way. Dis am de way dat you go to de home of de people dat eat clay, an' to de place whar de debbil live. I was dere once, but don't want to go ag'in!"

"You are quite a curiosity, Samson," observed Bill Fisher. "You are the only person I ever knew of that went to the home of the devil, and got back again. I think we had better take a trip to the place after we rescue Charlie Reid."

"I should like to see the clay-eating people he speaks about," spoke up Professor Lehman.

Our friends noticed that the water kept rising all the while, which Samson said it would continue to do until the tide of the ocean was at its highest point.

Then it would gradually recede, and they would have no difficulty in getting out into the lake again.

This proved to be true. For six hours they were compelled to remain in the cavern, and then, when the tide turned, the vessel was sunk and the prow turned for the lake.

It did not take them long to reach it, and when they came to the surface it was pretty nearly as dark as pitch, for a good part of the night had passed while they were in the cavern.

It was decided that some one should go ashore and pay a secret visit to the village of the natives to look for some signs of Reid, so Gus Simonson and Joe volunteered to go.

They succeeded in getting very close to the huts of the savages, but not a sign could they see of Reid, for the reason that he was lying in one of them, bound hand and foot.

At length they came to the conclusion that he had either never reached the village, or that the savages had killed and eaten him.

So reluctantly they turned their steps back to the submarine boat.

"I don't believe he is dead," said Fisher, when they reported. "We'll wait till to-morrow morning, and then Ben and me will take a trip to the village. They won't hurt us, because they are afraid of the white spirit."

A snug hiding-place for their boat was found on the opposite side of the lake, and all save the watch turned in.

The next morning Ben and Bill Fisher went ashore, and made their way to the village.

Fisher carried his cane as usual, and Ben was armed with a rifle, revolver and hunting knife.

As they neared their destination they noticed that something unusual was going on, and presently they observed the object of their search tied to a tree.

The natives were just getting ready for their sport, and so

interested were they that they failed to notice Ben and Fisher, who stole into an empty hut not thirty feet from the tree to which Reid was tied, and became interested spectators of the scene.

"Jee-rusalem!" exclaimed the lame man, when he saw Reid make the pheasant fight; "Charlie knows a thing or two about cock-fighting, I guess."

"Yes, and he is going to win his way to freedom without our assistance," returned Ben.

"It is all in the way the birds are handled. Those women just throw them down any fashion, and if the cocks were not pretty tame, half of them would 'fly the coop.'"

The two watchers felt like applauding when Reid picked up his gaily-plumaged champion and started to go; but a moment later, when the king strove to stop him, Fisher uttered a word that would not look well in print, and then walked to the door of the hut.

Before Ben could divine his intention the lame man leveled his cane at the cannibal king and shot him dead in his tracks.

"Come on!" he cried; "we will go right out among the black scoundrels. Charlie Reid is going aboard the *Sea Wanderer* with that rooster, or my name ain't Bill Fisher!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE MUTINEERS ARRIVE.

Having a fair wind nearly all the way, and sailing a straight course, the schooner *Event* reached the islands she was bound for not over thirty-six hours behind the *Sea Wanderer*, for they were the same group of islands.

Jake Sterling and his crew were in fine feather, or, in other words, they were all healthy and in good spirits.

"We have got to be a little careful," said Sterling, to those of his crew who had never been to the islands before. "Ther three largest islands are inhabited by cannibals, and one of 'em has got a crowd of people who live in big caves under the ground, and eat clay instead of grub. What we want to do is ter make friends with the savages, an' then we'll be all hunk if ther *Sea Wanderer* happens to pay a visit there."

A cheer went up from the men as the villain ceased speaking, and then one of the schooner's original crew asked what was to be done with the mates, who were still confined in the hold as prisoners.

"We'll set 'em ashore on one of ther biggest islands, an' let 'em shift for themselves," retorted Sterling.

The prisoners were very glad when they were brought up and informed of what was to be done with them. They were to be set at liberty, and that was a great deal better than being confined in a foul-smelling hold, even if they were to be limited to an island in the Pacific Ocean.

The schooner came to an anchor off one of the smallest islands, and then the mutineer leader ordered a boat lowered and the prisoners to be set ashore on the largest of the islands, which was about a mile and a half distant.

An old shotgun and some powder and shot was found in the cabin, and this, with a couple of sheath knives, was given to the two men, and then they were deposited upon the island, which, by the way, was the same one our friends had landed upon.

No savages showed up when they landed, and the men who rowed them ashore made their way back to the schooner again, jeering at the marooned pair as they did so.

About the middle of the afternoon Jake Sterling made up his mind to go ashore on one of the islands, and endeavor to make friends with the savages.

He chose an island that was not nearly as large as the one

the mates had been set upon, upon the shore of which a small collection of thatched huts could be seen from the deck of the schooner.

Picking out six men to accompany him, he went ashore, carrying a handkerchief attached to a stick to let the natives know that they desired to be friendly.

They were observed some time before the boat's keel grated upon the beach, and a swarm of the blacks came down to meet them.

Sterling had been shrewd enough to take about half a barrel of rum along with him, and when they had landed upon the beach he very familiarly invited the natives to have a friendly drink.

It is needless to state that the invitation was accepted, and in a short time they got on very friendly terms.

The blacks were of the same race as those on the other island, and they were ruled by the same king Bill Fisher shot with his cane.

Sterling learned about the mysterious death of the dusky ruler, and that a new king was to be chosen that day by the people of the various islands.

Brilliant ideas were continually striking Jake Sterling, and one came into his head at this time.

"Where is the chief of this island?" he asked.

"Me be," exclaimed a tall fellow standing near.

"Well, what is the matter with you being king?"

"Me like to be," replied the savage, brightening up.

"Well, if you and your people will help us capture a queer boat we expect to find somewhere around here, I'll fix it so you will be king."

"We help you!" cried a number of the savages in a breath.

"Good enough! Now, I'll tell you how to do it," and then Sterling unfolded a plan to the ignorant blacks, which was nothing more than to send a number of men to each of the inhabited islands to announce the chief, whose name was Beano, as a candidate for king.

"If that don't work, why, you can declare yourself king, and we'll help you fight it out," said he.

"It dat um funny boat um want?" suddenly asked one of the natives, pointing to an object that was lying between the shore and the anchored schooner.

Turning, the mutineers beheld just what they were searching for.

There was the *Sea Wanderer* lying idly upon the surface of the water—before their very eyes!

CHAPTER XII.

IN A BAD POSITION.

When the savage king dropped dead in front of him, Charlie Reid was as much astonished as the natives.

He had no time to figure the thing out, for the next moment he heard a familiar voice exclaim:

"Good boy, Reid! The king went back on his word, and the white spirit killed him for it!"

Turning, he beheld Bill Fisher limping toward him with Ben Mellville close at his heels.

The moment Fisher spoke, a deep hush came over the dusky crowd, and not one of them made a move to touch either him or Ben.

"Come, Charlie," observed the latter; "hold fast to your bird and follow us to the boat."

"All right," was the response; "I shan't ask any questions just now."

Acting as though he cared no more for the savages than he did for the leaves that were strewn on the ground, Bill Fisher flourished his cane a couple of times and led the way for the lake.

Strange to say, not one of the dusky horde made a move to prevent them, and two minutes later they were lost to view in the bushes.

The three did not halt until they reached the shore of the lake, where the *Sea Wanderer* was awaiting them, and in a very short time they were on board.

"Hurrah!" cried Joe Summers; "we are all together once more!"

"And Fisher's cane did it all!" cried Ben.

"I propose that we go to one of the islands that is not inhabited and endeavor to shoot some game for dinner," suggested Bill Fisher, as the prow of the submarine boat was turned in the direction of the outlet of the lake.

"Just the thing!" exclaimed the professor, enthusiastically. "Broiled quail or partridge suits me first-rate."

So it was decided to proceed at once for one of the other islands.

The *Sea Wanderer* skimmed along the surface of the lake until the point was reached where they had to go beneath the surface.

Then the deck door was shut and fastened, and down they went.

Ben was lucky enough to strike the subterranean passage almost immediately, and the wonderful vessel was soon forging through it.

They did not come to the surface until they were at the mouth of the little river, as they did not care to have another encounter with the natives just then.

When they did come up the boat began cruising about to find an island that suited them.

After a while one was found, and a landing was made upon it.

Gun in hand, Ben and Joe sprang ashore to shoot some game.

They had brought shotguns, but across the back of each a Winchester rifle hung, which was to be used in case of emergency.

Ben and Joe had not walked over a dozen yards after entering the bushes when they startled a flock of birds resembling the quail, only somewhat larger.

In less than half an hour they had bagged all they required, and then made their way back to the boat.

Along about the middle of the afternoon they started back to the island, with the idea of paying a visit to the place where the clay-eaters lived.

All were interested in the wonderful stories Black Samson told about the underground country, and they concluded it was worth taking a risk to see.

Ben, who was at the wheel, as usual, chose the shortest way to the island.

When the *Sea Wanderer* had been gliding along for about fifteen minutes our friends suddenly observed a crowd of savages on the shore of one of the islands.

But this was not all. As a bend was rounded they came in sight of a schooner lying at anchor.

"Jee-rusalem!" exclaimed Bill Fisher; "if that ain't the same schooner that picked up the mutineers I'm a living sinner!"

"You are right, by Jove!" spoke up Gus Simonson. "I wonder what she is doing here in these parts?"

"After a fresh supply of water, perhaps," suggested the professor.

Meanwhile Ben had placed a pair of glasses to his eyes and was gazing intently at the shore.

"It is quite easy to explain why the schooner is here," said he,

after a pause. "Jake Sterling, the mutineer leader, is ashore with the blacks, and seems to be on very friendly terms with them. Ah, they are looking at us now, and they seem to be very much excited over the appearance of the *Sea Wanderer*. The fact of the schooner being here means no good to us, I'll wager."

"Sterling know more 'bout Satan's Island dan I do," spoke up Black Samson, who had been an attentive listener to the conversation. "He t'ink we come here wif de *Sea Wanderer*, an' he git de schooner to come, so he get our boat 'way from us."

"Samson has hit the idea exactly," said Bill Fisher. "But if Jake Sterling gets the best of us he has got to be pretty smart, I can tell you."

"Let's make a circle around the schooner, and then go a trifle closer to the shore," suggested Joe Summers.

This was agreed upon, and the *Sea Wanderer*, which had been brought to a stop at the first sight of the savages, was started ahead.

They made a complete circle about the anchored schooner, creating a great deal of excitement among those upon her deck, and then made direct for the shore where Jake Sterling stood among the natives.

Our friends had no idea of making a landing among the villains, so when they were quite close the course of the *Sea Wanderer* was changed to an oblique direction.

"We will let them know that we don't care a continental for them," observed Fisher. "By Jove! they are going to make an attack on us, if we will let them."

This was true. Sterling and his men had already launched their boat, and the natives were busy shoving their canoes into the water.

"I think we had better get our rifles ready and give those fellows a good reception before we make off," said Reid.

He had scarcely uttered the words when there was a sort of grinding shock, and the *Sea Wanderer* came to a sudden stop.

They had run upon a rock!

CHAPTER XIII.

STERLING IS SURPRISED.

A howl of delight left the lips of Jake Sterling when he saw the *Sea Wanderer* strike upon the rock.

A boat loaded with men from the schooner could be seen making for the scene, and Sterling felt that the *Sea Wanderer* would surely fall into his hands.

About half the number of the attacking party succeeded in reaching the *Sea Wanderer* at the next charge they made, though many of them fell into the water with bullets in their carcasses.

The natives were a very brave and reckless lot, and though it was an awful galling fire that was poured upon them from the pilot-house of the submarine boat, they did not stop until they clambered upon her deck.

The submarine craft was now in the villain's possession, but how was he to get inside, or move her? This was the question that came before him at that moment, and he grew very much puzzled.

At length a happy thought struck him.

He would get a cable from the schooner and attach it to the *Sea Wanderer*, and then, under the combined efforts of his own men and the savages, she could easily be pulled ashore.

Sterling at once called out to the mutineers in the other boat, and told them to go back to the schooner and get the strongest cable they could find aboard.

This order was obeyed as soon as it was possible, and then the

end of the cable was given to the savages, so they might make it fast somewhere.

For some reason our friends had ceased firing upon the savages, and this gave them all the chance they wanted.

But they could not find anything to make the cable fast to, and, much puzzled, the chief asked Sterling what he should do.

"Go to the stern and make it fast to the wheel!" exclaimed the mutineer leader.

The blacks hastened to do this, but finding a ring in the rudder-post just below the waterline, they endeavored to run the cable through it.

They soon found it was necessary to put a man in the water to do the job, so a lithe, active fellow at once jumped overboard and swam to the spot.

He took the end of the cable, and was just about to pass it through the ring, when, as if by magic, he suddenly disappeared from the surface.

A cry of fright immediately left the lips of the savages when they saw he did not rise again.

"What's the matter?" shouted Sterling, as he observed the commotion the disappearance of the black had caused.

The chief quickly told him.

"It was only a shark, most likely," observed the villain; "try it ag'in."

But not one of the natives could be induced to jump into the water again, so they tried to finish their job from the canoes.

But the first fellow who reached beneath the water and attempted to pass the cable through the ring was quickly yanked downward and out of sight.

Like the one that preceded him, he failed to come to the surface again.

Two blacks now tried to do the job at the same time, and they succeeded without being interfered with.

A yell of satisfaction left the throats of the savages, and Jake Sterling and his men joined them.

"Now then, we'll pull her off!" cried the mutineer leader. "We'll tow her right ashore, too. Get ready, everybody!"

The cable was passed from one canoe to the other, until all save the paddlers had a hold upon it.

Then Sterling, who managed to keep nearest the shore, gave the word to pull.

And the savages did pull with all their might.

The moment the cable got a little taut the *Sea Wanderer* began to slide from the rock, and two minutes later she was being towed rapidly ashore.

"There's an old saying that 'there is more than one way to kill a cat,'" cried Sterling; "and I guess that is about right. We are——"

He did not finish what he was going to say, for at that moment the *Sea Wanderer* suddenly sank from sight!

A minute later the cable straightened out so quickly that it overturned the canoes right and left, and the savages were struggling in the water!

CHAPTER XIV.

NEW ARRIVALS.

Our friends felt that they were placed in anything but a pleasant position when the *Sea Wanderer* came to a standstill upon the rock.

When the hawser was brought, one of Reid's brilliant ideas struck him.

"Don't shoot at them any more at present," said he. "Let them think they are going to have it all their own way. The only

place they can make fast it us is at the stern below the water-line. One of us can put on a diving suit and go out there, and as fast as they try to tie the hawser, they can be pulled under the water and drowned."

"Good!" exclaimed Fisher. "Charlie, you put on the diving-suit and do the job yourself."

The scheme really seemed to be a good one, so Reid at once repaired to the water-chamber and donned the suit.

He had no difficulty in making his way to the stern after once leaving the vessel, as the huge rock the *Sea Wanderer* rested upon was comparatively smooth and level.

The sun made enough light for him to see in the small depth of water he was in, and just as he got to the stern he saw the black come down the surface with the end of the cable.

With a swift movement, Reid seized the fellow and dragged him to the bottom.

There happened to be a fissure in the rock close by, and he immediately jammed him in it.

"That fixes you," thought the daring man in the diving-suit; "and I guess it will surprise your friends up there."

He held his foot upon the savage until his struggles ceased, and then again turned his attention to the stern of the submarine boat.

A moment later he had pulled the second black below the surface, disposing of him as he did the other.

"Now then," mused Reid, "come to think of it, I guess I'll let them make fast to the *Sea Wanderer*. They will pull us off the rock, and then we can drown the whole business. I'll get inside right away and report."

He quickly made his way inside and informed his companions of the amendment to his original idea.

When the savages got the hawser fast and started to pull the vessel off the rock, Joe pressed the key to back.

"I'll assist them all I can," said he, with a smile.

When they were away from the rock he pressed the key to sink, and down they went.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Ben, "let her go ahead at full speed!"

Five minutes later they arose to the surface.

All hands rushed to the pilot-house to see what had become of their enemies.

The sight that met their eyes was a comical one, to say the least.

The hawser had broken under the strain and nearly all the little crafts that had started to tow them ashore were bottom-side up, and the mutineers and blacks were swimming and making ridiculous efforts to get them ashore or into shallow water.

"Jake Sterling got more than he bargained for that time," laughed Bill Fisher. "He ought to have known better than to try anything like that."

Their course led them directly past the mouth of the stream, which flowed underground to the lake on the island they had experienced their main adventures upon, and which also led to the cavern they proposed to explore on the morrow.

They were pretty well inshore when they passed it, and as they looked that way were astonished to see a ship's boat hauled upon the beach.

There was a mast in the boat, from which hung the remains of a woman's colored shawl and a bit of tattered canvas, which had evidently been used as a sail.

"Jee-rusalem!" exclaimed Fisher. "There are some other white people around here besides the mutineers and ourselves. That boat looks as though it might have brought some unfortunate castaways here."

"Which is enough to warrant us to investigate," added Ben.

It was well toward sunset, but our friends deemed it their

duty to learn, if possible, what had become of those who came to the island with the strange boat.

So the prow of the *Sea Wanderer* was turned shoreward, and a few minutes later she came to a stop within ten feet of the boat.

Remembering their late experience with the island's inhabitants, they were very cautious about going ashore, and it was not until they were pretty sure that no savages were about that Ben and Bill Fisher sprang ashore and made their way to the boat.

The couple no sooner reached it than they were satisfied that it had really brought one or more unfortunates to the island, and that, too, but recently.

And there were further signs to show that the natives had been there. The inside of the boat was literally bespattered with blood, and there were other evidences of a fearful struggle having taken place.

As Ben gazed upon this scene a sickening feeling came over him.

It instantly occurred to him that the persons the blood had flowed from had been killed and carried off to the village of the cannibals to be eaten.

As he bent over the gunwale of the boat to make a closer examination, he was horror-stricken at the sight of a shoe, which certainly had been worn by a female!

"Look at that!" he exclaimed. "The black fiends have captured a woman. We must go to her assistance."

"Right you are, Ben," returned Fisher. "The chances are that my old cane will have to do some more business. Come on; we will go aboard and get up to the cannibal village before dark."

Leaving the boat as they had found it, they went aboard the *Sea Wanderer* and reported the discovery they had made.

Ben brought the shoe with him, thinking that, if they were lucky enough to rescue its owner, it might be of some use to her.

The submarine boat backed into the middle of the stream, and then Joe Summers caused her to descend below the surface.

"Now for the lake!" exclaimed Ben, turning the electric light on and seizing the wheel.

The next minute they darted ahead, and in a short time the subterranean passage was reached.

As soon as the vessel got through into the lake Joe caused her to rise.

It was not yet dark, though it was fast getting that way.

Ben steered the *Sea Wanderer* straight for the village, and a minute or two later they were able to see what was going on there.

The savages were gathered about the square in its center, and many of them appeared to be crazed with alcohol.

It was plain that the death of the king had not stopped the festivities of their gala day, for they had hoisted his body to the top of a pole, and were even now throwing mud balls at it.

In the center of the square a huge fire was burning, and upon this two human bodies were roasting.

While our friends were gazing at these fiendish proceedings a startling thing occurred.

A scream of terror rang out, and they perceived two young and pretty girls running toward their boat!

CHAPTER XV.

THE SISTERS.

"By Jove! there are two girls!" cried Ben Mellville, in a voice of astonishment.

"Yes, and they have got to be brought aboard," replied Joe Summers.

"Make for the bank, so we can get ashore!" exclaimed Bill Fisher. "Ben and I will do the job."

The prow of the *Sea Wanderer* touched the bank just as the fleeing girls were caught by a couple of the natives.

"Stop that, you black hounds!" shouted Fisher, waving his cane in a threatening manner; "the white spirit won't allow it."

Then he leaped ashore, followed by Ben, while those on board seized their rifles and came out on deck.

Meanwhile, Fisher hurried to the scene at a gait which was a sort of a hop, skip and jump.

Both he and Ben were recognized by the savages, and every one of them came to a standstill, as though they were just the least bit afraid of our two friends.

The lame man did not hesitate, but walking up to the two blacks who held the struggling girls, shot them both with his wonderful cane.

They dropped to the ground one after the other, and then, requesting Ben to conduct the fair females to the submarine boat, he advanced upon the throng of dusky revelers, and pointed his cane right and left.

Every time he did so one of them dropped, either dead, or badly wounded from the bullets that came from it in such a noiseless manner.

The ignorant natives could not understand it, and with yells of terror they fled for their huts.

Fisher turned back with a laugh, muttering:

"They have got a few more carcasses to hang up with the dead king, so they can amuse themselves a good while throwing mud balls."

Not a move was made to stop him, and he soon reached the edge of the lake and stepped aboard the *Sea Wanderer*.

Ben and the two girls were already there, and when Fisher entered the room below the pilot-house he bowed with the politeness of a country swain.

The poor girls were very badly frightened over what they had passed through, but not so much so as to hinder them from telling the story of how they came to be there.

Their names were Jennie and Mattie Markham, and they were the daughters of the captain of the brig *Mascot*, which had foundered at sea two days before.

They and two sailors had been the only ones saved when the brig went down, and in one of the ship's boats they managed to reach the island about the middle of the afternoon.

Almost the instant they landed a crowd of savages burst from the bushes and killed the two sailors before they could make a move to defend themselves.

The two girls also stated that they were twins, aged sixteen, and, with the exception of a maiden aunt, who resided in New York, they had not a living relative.

Jennie and Mattie were shown to a cosy little room just aft of the salon of the vessel, and then Joe caused the *Sea Wanderer* to sink.

On the morning of the third day following the advent of Jennie and Mattie Markham aboard the *Sea Wanderer*, it was unanimously decided to pay a visit to the underground place where such wonders were reported to exist.

So the vessel's prow was turned toward what they had dubbed "Big Island," and arriving there, they went below the surface before entering the stream, so the sisters might have no unpleasant recollections from the sight of the ship's boat on the beach.

Joe concluded not to go to the surface at all before entering the cavern, so they kept on at half speed, and in due time entered the lake.

After that it did not take Ben long to run to the passage that led into the cavern.

As the tide was favorable, they soon got inside, and then the boat came to the surface.

The deck door was thrown open and a fresh supply of air came in, though where it came from was a mystery to all hands.

The wonderful electric light illumined the vast cavern with a sort of ghostly glare, and many were the expressions of alarm that came from the lips of the sisters as they surveyed the scene from a window of the pilot-house.

"Now then, Samson, which way do we go?" asked Ben, addressing the cook.

"Straight for de north," was the reply. "We go till de wall of de cavern stop us, and den de tide, which am berry funny in here, do de rest."

"We will allow that you know, as you have been here before," said Bill Fisher. "Let her go, Ben."

The boy did so, and in about fifteen minutes the wall of the cavern stopped them.

"Here am de place," exclaimed the black cook, the white of his eyes showing as though he was beginning to get frightened. "Now, when de tide get jest right we go down like de deuce for 'bout a mile, an' den we be in de underground sea that is by de country of de clay-eaters."

"We go down, eh?" questioned the professor, a little nervously. "Well, how do we get up again?"

Before Black Samson could make a reply, a loud, roaring noise came to their ears, and the next instant a feeling of dizziness came over all.

They were surely going downward, and that, too, at a remarkable pace!

CHAPTER XVI.

IS QUITE STARTLING.

Down—down—down!

The rate of speed at which the *Sea Wanderer* was descending was something terrific.

It appeared as if the boat had entered a monster well, and the bottom had suddenly dropped out, allowing it and the water to fall downward like a shot!

Pale as a sheet, our friends gazed into each other's faces, not speaking a word.

A minute of deathly silence followed, and still they kept on descending.

Samson, who did not seem to be as much alarmed as the rest, suddenly spoke.

"Two minutes more," said he, "and we will be at de bottom!"

"Jee-rusalem!" Bill Fisher managed to exclaim; "this beats any elevator I ever went down on!"

The seconds flitted on, and presently, true to what the cook had said, the roaring noise ceased, and the boat came to a standstill with scarcely any more jar than an elevator when it stops at a floor.

"We have landed somewhere, I guess!" exclaimed Ben, gazing out of the window to see how it looked outside.

"Yes," returned Samson; "we now drift along wif de current a little way, and den come to sfill water."

A sigh of relief went up from all hands.

They decided unanimously that they had just experienced the most remarkable event of their lives.

"Keep her steady, Ben!" cried Gus Simonson. "We are as fast as a horse can trot!"

"I have her as steady as a clock," was the young fellow's reply. "My! but we are going!"

On either side of them a wall of solid rock could be seen, and it was no easy task to keep the vessel straight.

After they had glided along for about ten minutes the speed began to gradually slacken, and in ten minutes more they were calmly floating upon the surface of a broad lake, which the professor estimated to be at least half a mile below the level of the sea.

Charley Reid opened the deck door and went outside for the purpose of getting a better view of their surroundings, and at the same time to ascertain if there was any air in the vast underground cavern fit for breathing purposes.

He found that the latter was the case, for, beyond a damp, misty atmosphere, the air was almost as good as that to be found at the earth's surface.

As far as Reid could see, he judged the lake not to be over two or three acres in extent.

The shores on all sides seemed to be covered with a golden sand, and looked very beautiful indeed.

Being a little away from the brilliant light in the pilot-house, he could see objects much plainer, so, after a couple of minutes of observation, he went inside and reported.

"Dere are diamonds and t'ings in de golden sand," said Samson. "De good captain who build de *Sea Wanderer* git a few once, but he no allow de men to hab any. He say dat riches were a curse to all mankind, an' dat dey no need any more dan de wages he pays dem."

"I agree with him that riches are a curse," spoke up Bill Fisher, "but still I wouldn't mind having so much money that I wouldn't know what to do with it."

This remark caused his companions to laugh for the first time since they started to descend into the cavern.

Even the girls smiled, and Mattie observed that Mr. Fisher was a philosopher of no mean caliber.

"I propose that we go ashore and see what the golden sand does contain," suggested Joe, from his seat at the keyboard.

"Agreed!" cried all hands.

The prow of the submarine boat was turned to the nearest shore, and in a very short time it grated upon the sand.

"Look out for de clay-eaters," cautioned Black Samson. "Dey bery ugly people."

"All right," returned Fisher. "I don't think it would be advisable for any one to go far from the boat."

After a short discussion it was decided that all save Charlie Reid and Samson, the cook, should go ashore and examine the sand.

The twin sisters were much elated at the prospect of setting foot upon the shining shore of the lake, and, under the escort of Ben and Joe, they stepped from the vessel's prow to the sandy beach.

Fisher, Simonson and Professor Lehman followed, and by aid of the electric light they began examining the glittering stuff.

After about five minutes of this pleasant pastime, Jennie suddenly came across a bit of stone that resembled a piece of cut-glass.

"I have found a diamond!" said she, with a laugh.

"It is, sure enough," cried the professor, taking it in his hand. "That is worth at least five hundred dollars, Miss Markham. You are a very lucky young lady."

That was not all the precious stones there were there, either, as was proven a moment later when Gus Simonson picked up one as large as a hickory nut.

The man was so delighted over this that he threw his hat in the air and uttered a hurrah.

"All the money I have ever had I have had to work for," said he; "but I guess if I ever get to New York with this fellow, I'll be able to take it easy the rest of my life. If the one Miss Markham just picked up is worth five hundred dollars, this one is certainly worth twenty thousand!"

"Hardly," returned the professor, "but it ought to bring nearly half that amount."

"Well, I'll find another, then;" and Gus set to work to make his word good.

To the astonishment of his companions, he did find another diamond, and it was fully as large as the first, at that.

For the second time he uttered a loud hurrah, and Bill Fisher remarked that if he found another he would surely go crazy.

"I must find one to be even with Jennie," said Mattie, and she went diligently to work searching for it.

But it seemed that there was no more in that locality—at least within the radius of light thrown out by the lamp in the pilot-house.

Ben suggested that Simonson and the professor go aboard the *Sea Wanderer* to move her farther along the beach, so a further search for the precious stones could be made.

"Yes, go on," chimed in Fisher. "We will stay here on the beach and follow the boat along."

"I don't care much whether I find any more or not," exclaimed Gus. "But I don't blame the rest for wanting some. So come on, professor; let's give them a show."

The two clambered aboard and prepared to move the vessel.

Simonson had scarcely taken hold of the wheel when he heard a shout from the shore.

Glancing in that direction, he beheld the five they had left there struggling in the midst of a swarm of dwarfish-looking men.

"Heavens!" he cried. "The clay-eaters have got Bill Fisher and the young people in their clutches! Get out the rifles; we must save them."

His companions quickly followed him to the deck, but they were too late, for at that moment the natives of the underground place darted through an opening in the side of the cavern, carrying the diamond searchers with them.

A feeling of dismay, intermingled with discouragement, came over them, and, with pale faces, they gazed blankly at each other.

"Dat will be de last of Mister Fisher, an' Ben, an' Joe an' de poor girls!" exclaimed Black Samson, with chattering teeth. "De clay-eaters kill 'em all, suah!"

"No, they won't," replied Simonson, brightening up a trifle; "not if Bill Fisher has a ghost of a show. He is as good as a whole regiment in time of danger."

The professor shook his head sadly, but said nothing.

"We must not stay here," cried Charlie Reid, fingering his rifle nervously. "If our friends have got to die we may as well die trying to save them."

"Nobly spoken, Reid," said the professor. "Samson, you stay here with the boat till we come back, even if you have to remain until all the provisions are eaten. Don't thrust your head above the deck."

"All right, sah;" and the face of the darky was almost gray with fright as he spoke.

The three were just about to spring ashore when something of a very startling nature happened.

The form of a man attired in a diving-suit suddenly emerged from the water, and staggering along a few paces, fell in a heap upon the glittering sand!

CHAPTER XVII.

STERLING IS IN LUCK.

The man in the diving-suit was none other than Jake Sterling, the mutineer. He had secured the diving-suit, which was the one Reid had once worn, from Beano, a newly chosen king of the island.

A couple of days went by. Sterling passed his time about equally between the schooner and the savage village, where he lived with the new king.

He had some one continually on the watch for the *Sea Wanderer*, and when the wonderful vessel appeared near the island, and went below preparatory to entering the creek on her way to the underground home of the clay-eaters, she was seen by a man who was stationed at the top of a tall tree about halfway between the village and the shore.

This man was one of the former crew of the submarine boat, and he knew enough of her to be satisfied that those inside her intended to come up the creek below the surface.

So he descended the tree and hurried to Jake Sterling to report.

The moment the mutineer leader heard this he ordered the diving-suit to be brought to him.

"What are yer goin' ter do, cap?" asked one of the men.

"I've got a thunderin' good plan, if you fellows will help me carry it out, an' them aboard ther *Sea Wanderer* does one thing that I want 'em to," replied the villain, as he hurried into the rubber suit.

"What is the plan?" asked a number of the men in a breath.

"I'm goin' to go down in the water right here, an' stand on the bottom till ther boat comes along; an' then, when she slows down a little before enterin' ther tunnel, I may be able to catch hold of ther ring on ther rudder an' git a tow inter ther lake. If I kin do this, I'll climb up on deck an' smash a big hole in ther window of ther pilot-house, an' drown ther whole business inside!"

"But the boat will never be any good after you flood her with water!" exclaimed one of the villains.

"Oh, yes, she will," was the reply. "I heard ther man that made her say that her machinery was well protected for an accident of that kind, and that it was rigged so she could be pumped out as soon as the hole that let the water in was stopped up. Now, just put some wind in this sack, an' screw my helmet on, an' I'll go down. The minute I'm out of sight you fellows go over ter the edge of the lake in the village an' watch for me. Now, then!"

The helmet was properly adjusted, and the air sack filled by means of a small pump that was attached to it, and the daring villain was ready to carry out the remarkable plan.

Seizing hold of a rope, he made a sign, and his companions lowered him over the side of the schooner.

The moment Sterling's head was below the surface he let go the rope, and then—

He landed lightly upon a slowly-moving body!

A thrill of joy shot through the man's frame.

"Great sea-dogs!" he thought, "if this ain't ther *Sea Wanderer* my name ain't Jake Sterling! Was I ever in such luck before?"

True enough! The rascal had descended just as the submarine boat was passing, and, under circumstances that were really wonderful, he landed plump on the deck of the vessel within six feet

of the stern! And the moment he got there he lay down flat and clung for dear life.

Our friends in the pilot-house did not once look toward the stern; they were continually looking ahead, not dreaming that danger could come from any other direction.

On went the submarine boat through the passage into the lake, and then into the cavern.

When it began to go down into the well-like place with lightning speed Sterling became so badly frightened that he lost his hold and became separated from the *Sea Wanderer*.

He was more dead than alive when he struck the bottom a few minutes later, and it was some time before he could gather himself together sufficiently to make an effort to save his life.

But at length he began walking along the bottom as fast as he could, under the circumstances, and in about ten minutes he found that he was going up a slight ascent.

Presently he saw a bright light shining through the water, and a sigh of relief escaped his lips, for he knew it was that made by the electric light in the pilot-house of the *Sea Wanderer*.

Nearer and nearer he approached to the surface, and at length, faint and nearly exhausted, he emerged from the water.

A bed of glittering sand lay before him, and with a mighty effort he staggered upon it, and then fell unconscious to the ground!

When he came to, a few minutes later, he found himself lying on the deck of the submarine boat, his helmet off, and the faces of Professor Lehman, Gus Simonson, Charlie Reid and Black Samson, the cook, bending over him.

"How came you here, Sterling?" demanded the professor.

"I don't know," replied the villain. "Give me a drop of brandy, will you? I am nearly dead!"

"You don't know?" echoed Gus Simonson, as he tendered him a glass of brandy. "Come now, the quicker you tell us the better it will be for you!"

As Reid had him covered with a revolver, Sterling thought it proper to make a statement, and he did so.

"I'll tell you all I know about it," said he. "One of my men fell overboard from the schooner last night, and about half an hour ago I put on this diving-suit, which was given me by the natives, and went down to look for the body. Somehow I landed on top of your boat, and I hung on because I was afraid to let go, until something happened that made me let go, which you know, of course, was when we struck the place where we came down like a shot. I managed to walk along the bottom and reach the shore, where you found me. That's all there is of it."

"I believe the most part of your story is true, Sterling, so we shan't ask you to explain any further," spoke up Simonson. "Now, Reid, we must go and see if we can find our lost companions. Professor, you and Samson hold this fellow a close prisoner till we come back."

"All right," replied the professor. "Hurry, and do all in your power to save them."

The next minute Simonson and Reid sprang ashore and started on the trail of the clay-eaters.

The professor then held his revolver pointed at Jake Sterling's head, and ordered Samson to take the diving-suit from him.

The villain did not offer to make any resistance until the job was nearly completed, and then, with a sudden move, he knocked the weapon from the hand of the professor.

Before the negro knew what had happened, Sterling drew his own heavy revolver and struck him a blow upon the head that completely took away his senses!

As quick as a flash the mutineer was upon his feet, and the

professor, who was not much of a fighting man, anyway, was served in the same manner.

"I guess the *Sea Wanderer* belongs to me now!" exclaimed Jake Sterling, as he proceeded to bind the two unconscious men with the same rope they had intended to hold him a captive with. "I may be a fool sometimes, but at others I am about as smart as they make 'em!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

PURSUED.

Meanwhile, Fisher, Joe and Ben had been having a hard time.

The rush of the underground dwellers was so sudden that our friends hardly comprehended their meaning until they were seized and rendered powerless to act.

Fisher made a move to use his cane upon them, but he was too late.

The clay-eaters had a supply of peculiar-looking netting with them; this they wound around the bodies of the five in an exceedingly short space of time.

The two girls uttered screams of terror, and Ben managed to make one call for help; then they were whisked away into a dark passage that opened in the wall a few yards from the glittering sand of the beach.

The passage was not over a hundred yards in length, and once through this they emerged into a broad cavern of unlimited extent, which was lighted by a strange, unnatural glare.

The mob of strange little men, who had captured our friends so neatly, proceeded along for perhaps half a mile, and then they came to a collection of low, squatty huts built of mud and stones.

"This must be the place where these fellows live," said Bill Fisher, addressing his companions as coolly as though they were making a tour of inspection in the remarkable underground place, instead of being prisoners.

Joe Summers answered with a sort of groan.

"I wonder what they intend to do with us?" said he.

"No doubt they intend to kill us," replied Ben; "but we must not let them."

"And we won't, either," exclaimed Bill Fisher. "My arms and my cane are bound tightly to my sides by this net, but I'll work them loose before long, and when I do I'll make it interesting for some of them."

The clay-eaters carried their captives straight to the center of the collection of huts, and deposited them upon the ground side by side.

Jennie and Mattie were conscious of what was taking place, but they were too terrified to speak.

The boys tried to encourage them, and were partly successful.

Their captors, who really looked more like animals than men, did not seem to be in any hurry to kill them, if they meant to do such a thing at all, but busied themselves at stirring a sort of paste in a number of pots that were hanging over fires.

A sort of soft coal seemed to be the fuel that fed the fires, and they burned brightly enough, and sent out a good supply of heat as well.

Bill Fisher lay quite near one of them, and he soon found it so hot as to be uncomfortable.

But he noticed something else, also, and that was that the heat caused the strands the net was composed of to stretch.

He found this out by exerting himself occasionally, and when he knew that it was possible for him to free his arms he quickly whispered the tidings to his companions.

This caused them all to grow hopeful, for they felt that they

could make a good stand against the clay-eaters if they only had the opportunity to make a fight.

Meanwhile Fisher kept on working away at the peculiar bonds that held him powerless.

In five minutes' time his right arm was free!

Then it was but the work of a moment to sever the rest of the net with his knife, because the clay-eaters were now engaged in eating the stuff they had been cooking in the pots.

As they were gathered all around their captives, they thought it unnecessary to watch them, and this just suited Bill Fisher's purpose.

It did not take him long to decide upon a plan of action.

The instant he was entirely free from the meshes of the net he coolly leveled his cane at a group of the dirty-looking little men, and pressed the hidden spring.

It was the best thing he could have done, for, as one of the clay-eaters tumbled over dead, the rest, who were near enough to see what had taken place, immediately gathered in a crowd about the body.

"Now I guess we'll move!" exclaimed Fisher, as he quickly severed the meshes that bound Ben.

With wonderful quickness Ben made his way to the side of the girls, and cut them loose.

The lame man performed a like service for Joe, and then all hands silently arose to their feet.

Luckily for them not a single weapon had been taken from them, so the male members of the little party felt comparatively easy.

"We'll move with as little noise as possible until the fiends see us, and then we'll give them a volley and run for it," advised Bill Fisher.

So intent were the underground inhabitants in examining the body of their companion who had died so suddenly that they had not yet looked in the direction of our friends.

With Fisher in the lead they started to cross the open space in the vast cavern, and find the passage that would take them to the shore where the *Sea Wanderer* lay.

They had probably got two hundred yards from the collection of huts when the clay-eaters suddenly observed them.

"Give them a volley!" cried Ben.

Both he and Joe had their rifles with them, and they promptly sent half a dozen shots into the mass of strange-looking people.

Their action had its effect, for the underground denizens came to a halt as though by magic, and began yelling like so many demons.

Then the boys seized hold of the sisters' hands, and the five ran with all possible speed.

They succeeded in getting a good lead before the clay-eaters again started in pursuit, and though they could not run as fast as the inhuman-looking little creatures, they bade fair to get to the passage ahead of them.

On they ran, Bill Fisher in the lead, making lightning-like bounds by the aid of his wonderful cane.

Suddenly they heard a shout coming from some point ahead of them.

"Jee-rusalem!" cried Fisher. "Here comes Gus and Charlie; now, I guess we will make the clay-eaters eat a little lead for a change!"

Sure enough, Simonson and Reid were hurrying to meet them.

Half a minute more and they joined them. Then all hands made for the mouth of the passage, which was now but a few yards distant.

When they reached it their pursuers were pretty close behind

them, and Fisher reckoned that they had just about enough time to get aboard the *Sea Wanderer*.

Through the dark passage they rushed, the yells of the underground savages sounding nearer every second.

Reid and Simonson fired a couple of shots at them to make them halt for a moment, and then they dashed on.

Ben uttered an exultant cry as they emerged from the passage, but it was quickly turned to one of dismay.

Instead of finding the welcome light of the *Sea Wanderer* to guide them in safety, all was in total darkness!

CHAPTER XIX.

DIRE MISFORTUNE.

"The *Sea Wanderer* has gone and left us!" exclaimed Ben. "Impossible!" cried Gus Simonson. "We left her but a few minutes ago, with the light in her pilot-house brightly shining."

"And with a prisoner on board," added Charlie Reid.

"A prisoner!" echoed Bill Fisher; "who?"

"Jake Sterling!"

"That settles it, then," said the lame man; "I haven't time to hear how Sterling got aboard, but if he was there you can depend upon it he is to blame for our boat not being here. Now, then, we must hide—and that at once!"

"Keep close to the wall, then, and we may find a niche large enough to hide in," whispered Ben.

The clay-eaters were even now pouring out of the passage, and, acting on Ben's advice, the party crept along close to the wall.

Luckily for our friends, the underground inhabitants had no lights with them, and this made them proceed in a slow and cautious manner the moment they got in the darkness.

Ben took the lead, holding fast to Jennie's hand, and he was closely followed by the rest.

For about thirty yards he walked along, keeping close to the wall all the while, and then he suddenly came to a narrow opening.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed, in a low tone; "follow me."

He squeezed into the opening, and the rest quickly followed.

They found they were in a narrow cleft which extended a long distance, as far as they knew, for they proceeded at least fifty feet before they came to a halt, and they had not reached the end of it yet.

The place was so narrow that they were forced to remain standing in single file, and even then they were wedged in pretty tightly.

"The little demons will have a good time getting us out of here, I reckon," muttered Bill Fisher. "I think I can kill them as fast as they come in."

It was their policy to remain perfectly quiet, so they did so.

At the expiration of five minutes they heard a noise which informed them that the clay-eaters had discovered the narrow place they were hiding in, and were coming after them.

The moment Fisher was sure of this he leveled his cane in the direction of the entrance and pressed the spring.

A howl of pain immediately followed this action, so he followed it up by sending half a dozen more bullets in quick succession.

"I'll block the place up with their dead carcasses," he whispered to Gus Simonson, "and by that time I reckon they'll let us alone."

At every sound he heard the lame man discharged his wonderful air-gun, and each time he did so a death-cry or a howl of pain followed.

When he had exhausted the magazine of his weapon he quickly recharged it again; but there was no further need of doing any more shooting just then, for the clay-eaters had vacated the passage, leaving their dead and wounded behind them.

"Suppose we go on a little farther, and then, after a reasonable time, come out?" suggested Ben.

"Go ahead," replied Fisher from his place in the rear.

The boy started forward, his companions following close behind him.

Ben had scarcely taken over half a dozen steps when the ground gave way beneath his feet, and he went shooting downward through space!

And Jennie Markham was so close to him that before she could halt she, too, went shooting downward.

The shriek that came from the girl's lips caused a thrill of horror to shoot through the frames of those behind her.

"Jee-rusalem!" exclaimed Bill Fisher; "what has happened there ahead?"

"Ben and Jennie have fallen into some sort of a pit," returned Joe. "I came within an ace of following them."

"Strike a light," said Charlie Reid.

Joe, who had not thought of this before, promptly struck a match.

Before him was a yawning hole, which, as far as he could see, appeared to be bottomless.

He quickly informed his companions of this, and a deathly silence followed.

Of all the accidents and incidents that had befallen the party since they left New York, this appeared to be the worst.

As soon as he could recover himself, Joe called out the names of Ben and Jennie.

But there was no response.

Then all hands joined in shouting, but the same result followed.

"I am afraid that is the last of them," said Gus Simonson, with a groan.

Before any one could make a reply the narrow passage was suddenly illuminated with a light.

Almost instantly a fierce yelling and chattering came to their ears.

The clay eaters had returned with lighted torches, and evidently meant to either kill or capture the party!

* * * * *

Professor Lehman felt very much humiliated and frightened at the sudden turn of affairs.

As had been before stated, he was not the sort of a man to deal with an unprincipled scoundrel, and his ignominious defeat cut him keenly.

The blow he had received was not hard enough to cause him to remain unconscious longer than a few minutes, and the moment he came to, he comprehended the situation.

"I guess I own the *Sea Wanderer* now," said Jake Sterling, with a grin. "Your friends, who were foolish enough to go ashore, can stay there now as long as they live. I happen to know the way out of this place, and I'm goin' ter start as soon as this curious tide gets ready ter do ther business."

"Even if you do know how to get the boat out of this place, you cannot do it alone," observed the professor.

"I know that well enough; you have got ter help me!"

"I refuse to do so."

"You do, hey? We'll see about that."

Sterling was a powerful man, and seizing the professor, who was by no means a lightweight, he dragged him to the chair in front of the keyboard that governed the machinery of the submarine boat.

Seating him in the chair, he coolly tied him fast, and then cut the rope that held his hands behind his back.

"Now!" exclaimed the villain, "if you don't do exactly as I say, I'll kill you, just as sure as my name is Jake Sterling!"

Huge beads of perspiration broke out upon the professor's brow. Was he to be compelled, in order to save his life, to take away the only chance of saving the lives of his companions?

As he thought over it, he made up his mind that, even if he did do as Sterling said, he would be killed as soon as the villain had done with his services.

Then he resolved to refuse to do his bidding, and, if it was necessary, to die then and there.

So, in a voice that trembled slightly, he exclaimed:

"Jake Sterling, I shall not touch the keyboard! Kill me if you like!"

"You will change your mind in a minute," was the retort. "To show you that I mean business, I'll cut off one of your ears. If you don't do as I say then, I'll cut off the other; then your nose next; and if that don't bring you to your senses, out will go your eyes!"

"You fiend in human form! you dare not!" almost screamed the professor.

"Dare not?" and with a diabolical chuckle Sterling drew his knife and, seizing one of the luckless man's ears, cut into the flesh that joined it to the side of his head!

As the warm blood trickled down his face, the professor knew that the scoundrel meant to keep his word, and all his courage left him.

"Don't be so cruel!" he cried, wildly; "I will do as you say,

though I should be slain for going back on my friends and associates. Don't cut my ear off, Sterling, please don't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the mutineer leader, kicking the prostrate form of the negro cook to further his feeling of delight; "I thought that would fetch you. Professor, it would just be fun for me to carve your fat carcass into mincemeat. Now, then, run their boat over to the other side of the lake, an' put out their light."

Reluctantly the poor man did as directed.

"Now," went on the villain, "as soon as the tide turns we will go up the flume and get out of this."

And Professor Lehman sat there, the perspiration streaming down his face, and the blood from his wounded ear trickling upon his shirt collar and dyeing it a crimson hue.

The seconds flitted into minutes, and the minutes rolled into hours, and still the situation remained unchanged.

But suddenly there came a roaring sound, and the *Sea Wanderer* began gliding through the water of her own accord.

Faster and faster she went, until at length she entered a narrow passage.

"Turn on the light!" commanded Sterling. "In two minutes more we will be going up like a streak of greased lightning!"

Without a word, the professor turned on the electric light.

Then there came a mighty roar, and, true to Jake Sterling's prediction, the submarine boat began shooting upward!

CHAPTER XX.

BEN AND JENNIE.

When Ben went flying downward through space it was so sudden that he was unable to utter a cry.

He was conscious of hearing a wild scream above him, and then he struck a slanting piece of ground, and with a rattling of loosened earth and stones he went down as though he were on a toboggan slide.

Whizz—rattle! Bump—bump! Down he went for a period of perhaps ten seconds, and then he landed in a bed of soft sand.

He was not rendered unconscious, so the instant he struck he made a move to scramble to his feet.

But before he could do so a heavy object struck him in the back, and he pitched headlong into the sand again.

A muffled shriek came to his ears, and then all was still.

"Great Scott!" cried Ben, scrambling to his feet; "where am I, anyhow?"

But the only answer to his question was the echo of his own voice.

Then he drew a match from his pocket and struck it.

As the flame flared up he beheld the unconscious form of Jennie Markham lying almost at his feet.

Ben gave a startled cry, and looked up as though he expected to see the rest of his companions come tumbling down.

But no such thing happened, so he bent over the unconscious girl and found she was still living.

"Jennie—Jennie! wake up!" he cried. "Are you hurt?"

This had the effect of recalling her to her senses, and, with Ben's assistance, she arose.

"No, I am not hurt," she replied. "I became so frightened that I fainted, that is all. But where have we fallen, anyhow?"

"I have no idea; but I will say that I never experienced such a sensation as I did when I rolled down that decline."

"Do you think we can get up again?"

"We must."

"Let us try, then, at once; but we had better call out to our friends to let them know we are alive."

"That is so!" exclaimed Ben. "I never thought of that before."

Raising his voice to its highest pitch, he called loudly to those they had left so suddenly above.

But there came no response.

Again and again he shouted, but with the same result.

He lit another match, and then the two gazed at each other with pale faces.

"Discharge your rifle—perhaps they might hear that," said Jennie, in a faltering voice.

Ben still had the weapon with him, as it had been strapped over his shoulders, and, with a gleam of hope shooting from his eyes, he unslung it.

He quickly removed the dirt that had lodged in the barrel, and then, pointing the muzzle in the air, pulled the trigger.

The report was almost deafening in the pent-up place, and when its echoes had died away the unfortunate boy and girl listened anxiously to see if it would be answered.

A quarter of a minute slipped by, and then their hearts gave a bound, and a simultaneous cry of joy left their lips.

They heard the faint report of a rifle.

It sounded so far away that Ben could hardly force himself to believe that he had fallen and rolled so far.

"I'll fire again," said he, and he promptly did so.

Again came the answer—this time two reports in rapid succession.

"They know we are alive," remarked Jennie, with a sigh of relief; "now, the next thing is to get us out."

"We might be able to do that ourselves," replied Ben. "Come, let us make the attempt."

Lighting another match, he took hold of Jennie's hand, and the pair started for the place they slid down in such an uncereemonious manner.

A few steps brought them to the mouth of a sort of natural chute, and the instant Ben's eyes rested upon the slippery incline, he knew it would be impossible for them to make their way up.

However, he made the attempt, more to satisfy his companion than anything else.

It was impossible to go ten feet up the chute, so steep and smooth was it!

"We cannot get up," said Ben; "our only chance is that our friends may find a rope long enough to reach down here."

"But how can they do that, when the *Sea Wanderer* is gone?"

"That is so," sadly replied the boy. "We are all in a very bad fix; but it would have been much more pleasant if we could have all kept together."

"Perhaps there is another way to get out," suggested Jennie, who, strange to say, was the more hopeful of the two.

"You are right!" exclaimed Ben. "But if we should leave this place, and be unable to find it again, how would our friends know what had become of us, in case they do succeed in getting down here to rescue us?"

"We could leave some sort of a trail so we could know the way back."

"You are right, Jennie. You are the one to be leader; I shall do exactly as you say."

"Well, come, then; the ground seems to be covered with soft sand, so we will drag our feet as we walk along, and that will make trail enough."

"That is true; but how about a light? Our matches will soon be gone, you know."

"We must use them carefully, and go as far as we can. Who knows but that there may be a place to ascend very close by?"

Ben argued the question no further. Taking his companion by the hand, he lighted another match, and started in a direction directly opposite to the mouth of the chute.

They soon found themselves in a passage not over five or six feet in width, and, with wildly beating hearts, they made their way along this.

At intervals of about a minute, Ben would light a match.

The ground continued to be of a sandy nature, so they had no difficulty in leaving a plain trail.

For about ten minutes they kept on, and then, just as Ben was about to strike another match, Jennie discovered light ahead.

"We must be careful now," observed Ben. "It is quite probable we are nearing another village of the clay-eaters."

He unslung his rifle, to have it in readiness, and then they made their way forward in a cautious manner.

Two or three minutes later they came to the mouth of the passage, and beheld a broad cavern, which was lighted by a fountain of fire in the center.

As there was no sign of the clay-eaters, they stepped out.

"What wonderful place is this?" cried Ben. "Who would dream of finding a cavern where a person can live and breathe so many feet below the surface of the earth?"

"It is wonderful!" returned Jennie. "If we only live to get back to civilization again, what a remarkable story we will be able to tell."

Without another word, the couple started to walk along the edge of the cavern, in the hope of finding a passage that would lead them upward toward the surface of the earth.

They had not been in the strange place over a minute before a deafening explosion rang out, and it began to literally rain fire!

With cries of fright, the two sought a place of shelter.

It seemed as though a thousand rockets had exploded in the cavern, and the intense heat that came from the falling fire was something terrible.

"Don't swoon, Jennie!" cried Ben, as they crouched against a wall of rock. "This is but a freak of nature—a volcanic eruption, most likely. This raining of fire gives me a strong hope of getting out of here."

"Why?" questioned the trembling girl.

"Because Black Sampson Spoke about Satan's abode being down here somewhere, and he no doubt referred to this cavern. If such is the case, we will be able to get out, for he has been here."

Flakes of living fire were falling pretty close to them, but they remained close to the wall, and thus escaped having their clothing burned.

For fully ten minutes the strange phenomena lasted.

Then it ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and Ben, taking Jennie's hand in his, started forward.

He had not taken three steps before both uttered a cry of joy. They could see a steadily burning light ahead of them, and hear the voices of people talking, not in the guttural gibberings of the clay-eating dwarfs, but in English.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TABLES ARE TURNED.

It did not take long for the rising, bubbling, foaming water in the flume to bring the *Sea Wanderer* to the lake above.

Jake Sterling breathed a sigh of relief as they came to the surface of the lake and began gliding in the direction of the submarine passage that led to the outside world.

"I'll take her directly to the schooner and get my men aboard; then, after I've had a little rest, we'll go back to that place below, where I left the fools in the hands of the clay-eaters. My men want ter become rich, an' I told 'em they should. I guess there are enough diamonds there ter give 'em all ther riches they want! An' then, ter sorter make things right, we'll leave ther fool of a professor an' ther nigger down there ter hunt up their friends. Ha, ha, ha!"

The villain laughed loudly as he concluded his string of thoughts, and the professor turned to see what caused his merriment.

"Never you mind about lookin' this way!" said Sterling. "Jest you keep your eyes on ther keyboard, an' do as I tell you. If you don't, you know what will happen."

The professor shrugged his shoulders uneasily. The blood was still trickling from his wounded ear, and he quickly turned his eyes to the keyboard.

Black Samson still lay upon the floor, bound hand and foot.

Occasionally, when Sterling was not looking his way, he would make an effort to burst the ropes that held him, and, being a very powerful man, he was stretching them to their utmost tension.

Just over the helpless form of the negro was a cage, which contained the pheasant cock Charlie Reid had brought aboard.

The bird was so tame that Reid did not keep the door of the cage fastened, and presently it came out and flew lightly to the floor.

Samson looked at the rooster, and the bird returned the glance, with interest.

"Come here, chick!" whispered the cook. "You bery good rooster."

As though it knew what the helpless man said, the pheasant uttered a shrill crow, and advanced a few steps.

"What in thunder is that?" demanded Sterling. "I didn't know we had a poultry show aboard this boat. Just wait a few minutes, my fine bird, an' I'll ring your neck for you. I reckon you'll do for my dinner."

The cock kept on crowing, and, becoming exasperated, Jake Sterling rang the bell for the professor to stop the motive power of the boat, and sprang after the pheasant, to make good his threat.

But a genuine surprise awaited him, for, instead of flying about with a frightened cackle, the cock flew at his face in a savage manner, burying its sharp spurs in the villain's cheeks.

Sterling uttered a yell of pain, and then, with a string of frightful oaths issuing from his lips, strove to beat the bird off.

In doing so, he stumbled and fell over the prostrate form of the darky, who, with a superhuman effort, rolled over on top of him.

"Now, den, professor!" yelled Samson, "untie yourself—quick!"

The professor did not wait to be told twice. With remarkable quickness, he untied the ropes that held him fast to the chair, and sprang to his feet.

Meanwhile, Jake Sterling was struggling like a wild man.

The professor sprang to Samson's assistance, cut his bonds, and, a moment later, Jake was overpowered, lying on the floor, bound hand and foot. Then he was locked up in the strong-room of the boat for safe keeping.

Samson was delighted at what he considered the intelligence of the bird in starting the confusion so that the professor could free himself.

"It neber do to lose you, old feller," said he. "Massa Reid no like to come back an' find you gone; an', 'sides, you a bery good friend to de professor an' me."

As soon as the bird was fastened in the cage, it crowed again, and the dusky cook grinned from ear to ear.

The professor kept the boat cruising around well off shore for about three hours, and then he sank her, and they started for the cavern.

Samson managed to steer fairly well, though the professor deemed it advisable to run very slow.

In due time they reached the lake near the village of the savages, and then they set about to find the passage leading to the underground lake.

They soon found it, but were forced to wait until the tide changed, in order to enter it.

When it did change, the boat went in easily enough, and promptly made for the wonderful flume.

Here, again, they were forced to wait until the water got ready to lower.

But they had not waited long when they heard a shout from the shore of the lake, and, looking out of the pilot-house, they beheld Ben and Jennie and two strangers beckoning and calling to them!

CHAPTER XXII.

DOWN THE FLUME AGAIN.

"We have found them!" cried Ben; and, if Jennie had been a boy, he would certainly have hugged her to express his joy.

The light ahead and the voices were enough to make him believe that they were approaching Bill Fisher and the rest of their companions, so he bounded forward, dragging the almost exhausted girl with him.

A minute later, and they emerged into a vast cavern, which was lighted by some unknown electric force.

Ben saw at a glance that it was not the one that joined the home of the clay-eaters.

But before he had time to think over the matter two men came running toward him.

They were strangers, and, hardly crediting his senses, the boy stood spellbound in his tracks.

"Hurrah!" cried one of the men. "We are so glad to meet a human being once more!"

"Who are you?" asked Ben, as he recovered from his astonishment somewhat.

"John Jamieson and Peter Hardy, the victims of a mutiny," was the reply. "We were set ashore on this island a few days ago, and the day before yesterday we were chased by savages, who got so close to us that we jumped into a lake to save our lives. But, instead of being able to swim, we were sucked down under the water and whirled into this cavern like corks in a mill-race. We were more dead than alive when we crawled out upon the beach here, and since that time we have been going about trying to find a way to get out. We found a way that led downward, but we would not go that way, as we thought we were far enough under ground already."

Then men, who were no other than the two mates Jake Sterling and his gang put ashore on the island, were nearly famished with hunger, but the sight of Ben and Jennie made them forget about their sorry plight for the time being, and they fairly danced for joy.

"Can it be that we have walked all the way up to the first underground lake?" thought Ben. "It must be, for, by what these men say, this cavern is certainly the one we entered when we left the lake at the village of the savages. By Jove! I am sure it is, for appearance proves it."

Then he told the two men to cheer up, and endeavor to forget about their hunger for a while.

"We had just hit upon a scheme to get something to eat," said Hardy; "but when we saw you and the young lady coming out of the bowels of the earth, we forgot all about it."

"Go ahead and carry out the scheme," returned Ben. "We will help you all we can, though I am sorry to say we have not a morsel of food with us."

Jamieson quickly produced a string, which he had formed by tearing his shirt into strips and knotting the pieces together.

At one end of this a bent pin was attached, and, as the man held the contrivance up for inspection, he said:

"We were going to try our luck at fishing, but we can't find any bait."

"There ought to be lizards over there on that wet rock," suggested Ben. "Have you looked?"

"No," was the reply; "but we will right away."

They quickly rushed to the rock, and Jamieson had the luck to capture one little lizard about an inch long.

This they cut into half a dozen pieces, and, baiting the hook with one of them, cast it overboard.

It seemed that good luck was with the hungry men, for in less than five minutes they succeeded in catching a good-sized fish.

Two more were caught in the same manner, and then, their bait being exhausted, they set about preparing the fish for eating.

There was a supply of driftwood on the shore, which had been sucked down from the lake above, and, with the one match he had left, Ben kindled a fire for them.

The fish were soon cooked, after a fashion, and the men lost no time in devouring them, not forgetting, though, to offer Ben and Jennie a portion.

As neither were hungry, they declined, and Jamieson and Hardy ate up everything but the bones.

Meantime, Jennie had taken a seat on the dry sand, and, being very tired, she soon fell asleep, though she tried hard to keep her eyes open.

After their meal, the two men excused themselves, and, going to a spot a few yards distant, threw themselves upon the sand.

"We haven't slept a wink since we have been in this place," said Hardy, "so, young man, if you will keep a watch so your friends won't come along and miss us, we will follow the young lady's example, and take a nap."

"Go ahead," retorted the boy; "I'll keep a good watch."

A few minutes later the mates were sound asleep.

Ben meant to keep awake, but, a short time after his companions went to sleep, he began to feel very drowsy himself.

He strove in vain to keep his eyes open, and fifteen minutes later he was sleeping as sound as the rest.

He did not know how long he slept, but when he awoke it was with a presentiment that something pleasant was going to happen.

And, sure enough! When he arose, the first thing his eyes rested upon was the *Sea Wanderer* lying calmly on the waters of the lake!

The cry of joy that came from his lips roused his companions, and a minute later all four were shouting to Professor Lehman and Black Samson, who were to be seen in the pilot-house.

The moment the professor saw them, he sent the submarine boat scudding for the shore, and they were soon on board.

It did not take them a great while to exchange stories of what had happened to them, and, this being done, a consultation was held to see what the next move should be.

It was soon decided that they should go down the flume, and, as it was nearly time for the water to sink in its mysterious manner, the boat was forced to the proper place.

The two mates were much surprised at the wonderful boat, and, when they learned that it was going to sink down a well-like place for many feet, they grew very much alarmed.

Samson supplied all hands with something to eat, and then, with Ben in the pilot-house, they were ready to go down.

They were not compelled to wait very long, for presently the dull, roaring sound came to their ears.

"Don't be frightened, gentlemen," observed Ben; "we went down in safety once before, and I think there is no danger this time."

But, in spite of his words, the boy was a trifle pale.

Before he had an opportunity to say anything further, the submarine boat was whirled around by the rushing waters, and the descent began.

As on the previous occasion, they got down in absolute safety,

and the *Sea Wanderer* was soon lying peacefully on the bosom of the little lake in the land of the clay-eaters.

The powerful light was turned on, and the boat slowly skirted the shores of golden sand in search of those who had been left behind.

But, when the complete circle had been made, not a sign had been seen of Joe Summers and his companions.

"We must go into the narrow passage, where Jennie and I left them so suddenly, and, if they are not there, the clay-eaters must have them in captivity," said Ben.

He steered to the shore near the spot where the narrow rift in the wall was, and then prepared to go in search of the party.

Jamieson and Hardy were only too willing to go with him, so they were promptly supplied with weapons and ammunition.

Hardy carried a huge lantern to light the way, and then the three stepped ashore.

It was but a few steps to the place where they had sought to hide from the clay-eaters, and the instant Ben got there he saw that the bodies of the dwarfish fellows Bill Fisher had slain had not been removed.

Some of them were firmly wedged in the narrow place, and this was conclusive evidence that Joe and his companions had not come out that way.

And, such being the case, they must have either jumped or lowered themselves in the pit, and went shooting down the natural toboggan-slide.

This was what Ben thought, but before he could settle upon a plan of action a startling thing occurred.

A loud explosion rang out, and our three friends were flung to the ground.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FAST UPON THE BOTTOM.

When Ben Melville and the two mates were thrown to the ground from the force of the explosion, neither were hurt.

They were temporarily stunned by the shock, and that was all.

As Ben made an effort to stagger to his feet, he found himself half buried in a pile of loosened dirt. But he soon managed to extricate himself, and, struggling out upon the solid ground, called to his companions.

Jamieson and Hardy answered him almost immediately, and one of them hastened to light the lantern, which had become extinguished.

"What caused that explosion, I wonder?" exclaimed Ben.

"I don't know—for the life of me," returned Jamieson. "There is something wonderful about this underground place, anyhow, and anything is liable to happen."

Before any further words could be spoken, they heard a faint cry.

Ben gave a start, and strained his ears to listen.

Again came the cry, this time sounding much plainer.

"Hello!" shouted the young pilot of the submarine boat.

"Hello!" came the reply. "Who is calling?"

"It is I—Ben Melville!"

The next instant there came a shout of joy, and a minute later a form came scrambling over the pile of dirt.

It was Joe Summers!

"Ben!"

"Joe!"

Then the two friends fell into each other's arms and almost cried for joy.

"Where are the rest?" asked Ben.

"Right there in the passage," was the hurried rejoinder. "Come, let us go to them at once; I fear some of them have been badly injured, if not killed!"

Jamieson and Hardy followed the two boys over the pile of loosened dirt, and entered a sort of passage.

A minute later the four came upon the forms of Bill Fisher and the rest lying upon the ground, in an unconscious state.

But not for long did they remain there, for none of them were injured. They had been wandering about in search of Ben and Jennie all night, and by a different route had reached the same cave.

The explosion, which had been caused by gas coming in contact with Charlie Reid's lighted match, had only stunned them, and they soon recovered.

It was a joyful reunion when they found they were all together

again; and, when Bill Fisher and his companions learned that the *Sea Wanderer* was but a few yards distant, he waved his cane in the air, and led them in a loud cheer.

It seemed rather strange that the explosion had occurred at such an opportune moment, but all were very thankful for it.

Realizing the possibility of the clay-eaters coming to learn what had caused the explosion, they resolved to get aboard their boat at once.

So, leaving the passage behind them, they hastened for the shore.

Three minutes later they were safely aboard, and the sisters were clasped in each other's arms.

Reid fairly hugged his game-cock when he learned of the part the bird had played in turning the tables upon Jake Sterling, and vowed that he would not exchange him for the largest diamond that had been found in the shining sand on the beach.

As they would be forced to remain there until the tide got ready to take them up the flume, Jamieson and Hardy said they would like to run the risk of going ashore to search for some diamonds.

Gus Simonson was ready to go with them, so the three hastened ashore, and, with the rest of our friends standing on the deck with loaded rifles, to guard against an attack from the clay-eaters, they were pretty safe.

They continued the search for over an hour, with excellent results, and then came aboard.

"I guess we have got enough for all hands," said Simonson. "This cavern is the richest spot on the earth to-day!"

"This spot isn't on the earth; it is under the surface of the earth," corrected Charlie Reid.

"It does not matter where it is," spoke up Hardy; "we found sixty-one diamonds between the three of us."

This was a fact, as they soon proved.

All hands were satisfied to leave the underground place now, and they waited anxiously for the tide to change.

It seemed a long while before it did, but it happened after a while, and up they went like a rocket.

The extraordinary ascent was made in safety, and the upper underground lake was reached.

They would be compelled to wait here until the tide would take them out through the subterranean passage, so, as it was meal time, Black Samson provided an excellent repast.

Not wishing to starve their prisoner, Simonson took some food to Sterling.

The villain was really very hungry, so, leaving the tray of eatables with him, Gus went back to dine with his companions.

The meal was a very pleasant one, especially to Jamieson and Hardy, and it was a long while before they arose from the table.

"I think we had better start for New York in a day or two," observed the professor. "For my part, I have had quite enough of Satan's Islands."

"We must explore a portion of the old ocean's depths before we start for home," said Ben.

"Yes, we have several diving suits aboard, and Reid is the only one who has put one on as yet," added Joe. "I should like to don one of the suits and take a walk upon the bottom of the sea."

"So would I, if my game leg would allow me," spoke up Fisher. "It must be time to go out through the passage now," observed Ben, a few minutes later.

This was true, for even now the *Sea Wanderer* was beginning to drift.

Joe pressed the key to sink, and they went below the surface. Then the prow was pointed for the outlet, and away they went. In exactly two minutes they were outside in the lake.

"Let us go to the surface, and see how the savage village looks," suggested Charlie Reid.

Joe pressed the key to do so, but the submarine boat did not move upward a particle!

"There is something wrong!" he exclaimed. "I——"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment the *Sea Wanderer* settled down upon the bottom with a jar that nearly threw them off their feet!

In vain did Joe and the professor strive to make the vessel rise. It was no use, and there they were fast upon the muddy bottom of the lake!

CHAPTER XXIV.

HIS MAJESTY, JAKE STERLING!

Jake Sterling was in anything but a pleasant mood when Black Samson and the professor locked him up in the strong-room aboard the *Sea Wanderer*.

He felt like kicking himself again and again for allowing himself to be beaten at his own game.

He fretted and fumed for a long while, but at length quieted down, and went to sleep.

When he woke, he felt a little bit easier, and appeared to be resigned to his fate.

Sterling was quite sure his captors did not intend to kill him. He knew that from what he heard the professor say; but still he felt uneasy every time he thought of Samson, the cook.

When Gus Simonson brought him the food, it was necessary to untie the captive's hands; but this made no difference, as far as his escaping was concerned, as the room was strong enough to hold the most powerful man in the world.

But when Simonson left him to eat his meal, he forgot something.

He failed to lock the door of the strong-room.

Sterling noticed this, and his heart jumped into his throat.

"I may be able to beat 'em yet," he muttered.

Then he hurriedly bolted the food, after which he untied the rope about his ankles.

He opened the door, and stepped into the narrow passage outside.

He could hear sounds of mirth and pleasantry above him, and he gritted on his teeth.

"It will never do for me to go up there," he thought. "I have no weapons, and it would be useless for me to attempt to get the best of 'em if I had. No! I must try and leave their boat without their knowin' it."

Just then his eyes rested upon the door of the room where the diving suits were kept.

Instantly a resolve came into his head.

He would put on one of the suits and leave by way of the sea-chamber as soon as they got out of the underground place!

It was a brilliant idea! But Jake Sterling was full of them, though he was not always successful in carrying them out.

Stepping into the sea-chamber, he proceeded to put on one of the suits.

Then he squatted upon the floor, to wait till the *Sea Wanderer* reached the lake above, when he would put the helmet on and leave.

If he was not interfered with, he knew this would be an easy thing to do, as the moment he opened the sea door and let the water in the vessel would go to the bottom, in spite of anything those above could do, and, until it was closed again, would remain there.

Sterling waited patiently, and when he became satisfied that the boat had reached the lake he put the helmet on.

Then he swung the sea door open, and almost instantly the room became filled with water.

The *Sea Wanderer* settled upon the bottom a minute later, and the villain stepped out.

Straight for the shore he made, as nearly as he could judge, and in fifteen minutes' time his head emerged from the water.

An exclamation of satisfaction left his lips.

The village of the savages was right before him!

As quickly as he could, he removed the helmet and walked up the bank.

The savages regarded him in about the same way as they looked at Reid when he paid his memorable visit there in the diving suit.

But some of them soon recognized Sterling, and hastened to meet him.

They appeared very glad to see him, and assisted him to remove the suit.

By the time this was accomplished, the king and three of the mutineer leader's men appeared on the scene.

"Glad to see um Sterling!" exclaimed the dusky ruler.

"Where have you been so long, cap?" asked one of the men. "We thought you were dead, like the rest of our crowd."

"What do you mean by saying the rest of our crowd are dead?" demanded Sterling, in surprise.

"I mean that you and us three are the only ones left of our gang."

"That's only too true, cap," spoke up one of the others. "That infernal submarine boat, or something else, struck the schooner and knocked a hole in her bottom. She went down right away, and all hands went with her but the three of us."

"And we only got ashore by ther skin of our teeth," added the man who had first spoken.

This was startling news to Jake Sterling, and the way he swore and raved for the next few minutes was something terrible.

It occurred to him that he must certainly have been a prisoner aboard the *Sea Wanderer* when the schooner was struck, which was the case, as the reader knows.

And this fact made him feel doubly sore over what had happened.

How could he expect to get possession of the submarine boat now, with only three of his men left to help him? And, in case they could not, how were they to get away from the islands, with the schooner lying at the bottom of the stream?

"We are in a bad box, men," said Sterling, when he had cooled down a trifle. "We must get the *Sea Wanderer*, or else we will have to stay here with the savages till a ship comes along to take us off."

There was some of the rum they had brought from the schooner left in the barrel, so the mutineers sought solace in that, inviting the king to join them.

The next morning the king came to them, and told them if they were to live on the island as his subjects they must marry some of the fair daughters of the place and settle down.

The mutineers were villains of the deepest dye, but they were not bad enough to lower themselves by marrying black women.

Sterling said he guessed they would not marry, but the king insisted that they should, and he did so in such a way that the rascally whites felt they dare not refuse.

"Um no marry, den um have heads cut off!" said he.

"We'll do anything to please you," returned Sterling, changing his tune quickly. "King, whatever you say goes."

"Um git women now, den!" exclaimed the dusky ruler. "Each white man must marry three."

Sterling shrugged his shoulders in an uneasy manner, while his three companions groaned outright.

"Um white men ought to be pleased wif what um Beano say," went on the king. "Dey hab a great honor put on 'em."

"Beano," said Sterling, addressing the black rascal, in a tone that was full of earnestness, "who was it that made you king of these islands?"

"You tell me how," replied the king.

"And you said I should have anything I wanted after you became king, didn't you?"

"Guess um did say dat."

"Are you going to keep your promise?"

The savage grinned, and then calmly said:

"No!"

"All right; that's all I wanted to know. You are the worst liar I ever met!"

The biggest part of the blacks who understood English were standing about, interested listeners to the conversation.

Somehow, they seemed to favor Sterling a great deal.

Since Beano had become their ruler, he had changed wonderfully. He was no longer the brave, cool-headed warrior, but a tyrannical ruler, who made his subjects jump to do his bidding at a snap of his fingers.

The majority of them were already tired of him, and many of them secretly wished him dead.

The instant Sterling called him a liar, Beano went into a fearful passion.

"Um Sterling die for dat!" he cried. "Him die right away, too!"

Drawing an ugly-looking knife, he made for the mutineer leader.

A feeling of reckless desperation came over Jake Sterling.

By the glances that were shot at him from the crowd, he knew that many were in his favor, so he resolved then and there to kill the man he had made king of the islands.

He nimbly dodged the enraged Beano, and then, quickly drawing his revolver, fired four shots at him, in rapid succession.

The king dropped like a log, and it was safe to say that he was dead before he struck the ground.

His heart throbbing with excitement, and with an air of the

most reckless bravado, the mutineer leader sprang upon the barrel in the center of the square, and in a ringing tone exclaimed:

"I declare myself the white king of Satan's Islands! I know fifty times more than the fool who just died so suddenly, and I promise to give you good government!"

The chorus of yells that followed this declaration was partly of rage and partly of applause, and when he saw that about half the crowd were with him, Sterling felt as much elated as though he had been elected President of the United States.

He endeavored to make a speech, but could not make himself heard.

Five minutes later the entire crowd of savages were engaged in a free fight.

Things promised to be very interesting for the self-proclaimed king.

CHAPTER XXV.

A LOOK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA.

A perplexed look came over the face of Joe Summers when he found the *Sea Wanderer* would not rise in the usual way.

"What can be the matter?" he asked.

"We must investigate," returned Professor Lehman. "The pump works in the usual manner, but the water does not seem to leave the sea-chamber."

"Ben and I will go below and make an examination," said Joe, rising from the chair in front of the keyboard.

The two boys promptly left the room and hurried down the iron steps.

As they came to the room Jake Sterling had been confined in, they saw the door was ajar!

"Hello!" exclaimed Ben. "What does this mean?"

He pushed the door open as he spoke, and found the prisoner was not there.

Then, for the space of a few seconds, the boys looked at each other in blank amazement.

"I know why we could not rise," said Joe, at length.

"Sterling caused it."

"Yes; he must have put on one of the diving suits and left by way of the sea door."

"But how did he get out of this room?"

"That is the fault of the person who paid him a visit last."

"It was Gus Simonson, then!" exclaimed Ben.

"I suppose it makes no difference who it was—Sterling has escaped, and, if he fastened the sea door open, we are likely to die here!"

"The villain has surely done it, if he thought of it!"

"We will see at once."

Joe seized a lever and pulled upon it.

To the joy of the two, it swung around.

"The door is shut now," observed the young electrician, with a sigh of relief. "We will go to the surface now."

The boys quickly made their way up the stairs.

Joe sat down before the keyboard, and Ben took the wheel.

The pump was turned on for a few minutes, and then, when the proper key was pressed, the submarine boat arose like a cork.

Bill Fisher led in a cheer when the surface was reached, and, when this had subsided, he turned his attention to Gus Simonson, and lectured him for forgetting to lock the door of the strong-room.

But all hands soon forgave him for it, they being so glad that, when Sterling went out of the sea door, he did not fasten it open.

It was decided to return to their quarters on the uninhabited island, and remain there till the next day.

As they passed down the stream beneath the surface of the water, they plainly saw the schooner, *Event*, resting on the bottom.

"Sterling has, no doubt, succeeded in reaching his black allies, but I reckon he will have to stay some time with them before he gets a chance to leave the islands," observed Bill Fisher.

"We must be careful and steer clear of the mutineers and savages now," said Ben. "The white villains are desperate, and they will go their whole length to get possession of our boat."

"We have no need of mixing with them again," returned Bill Fisher.

Joe brought the *Sea Wanderer* to the surface as soon as they were out of the stream, and then they started direct for their headquarters.

When they reached it, Ben and Charlie Reid went ashore, and shot some game and gathered a quantity of fruit.

They remained here quietly until the next morning, and then, by a unanimous vote, it was decided to pay a visit to the old ocean's bottom.

It was about four hours after sunrise when the prow of the submarine boat was turned seaward.

She continued on until they were well out of sight of land, and then, after taking a fresh supply of air, Joe caused her to sink below the surface.

Down, down they went, until the pressure was so great upon the boat that it threatened to crush her like an eggshell.

"We have struck a deep hole, and I don't believe it will do to go down any farther," observed the professor.

Just then the bottom of the *Sea Wanderer* landed lightly on the deck of a sunken ship that had apparently been lying at the bottom of the ocean for many years.

"What is this?" cried Ben, as the boat careened over to the angle of the deck of the wreck.

"It means that we have found a ship that has foundered and settled here," returned Bill Fisher.

All hands gazed about them, to see what sort of a vessel it was. As near as they could judge, it was not a boat of the nineteenth century at all. It reminded them more of the Spanish treasure-ships they had read about, though it did not seem possible that the hull of a vessel could remain intact for a hundred years!

There was a cabin house near the stern of the wreck, which was still in a good state of preservation.

The *Sea Wanderer's* bottom was lifted a couple of feet from the deck, and then Ben pushed her prow squarely into the cabin-house.

It gave way immediately, but not a portion of it started to rise for the surface.

"The wood must be preserved by the water," said Charlie Reid, "and it has become so heavy that it will no longer float."

"You are right," returned the professor.

"I think we had better go up out of this hole," suggested Bill Fisher. "We have seen about all we can here."

This was satisfactory to all hands, so Joe pressed the button, and they went up.

When about halfway to the surface, they forged ahead at a slow rate of speed.

In less than a minute they saw the sloping bottom in front of them, and, in order not to strike it, they were forced to go up a few feet.

"This is, no doubt, the average depth of the ocean in this vicinity," said the professor; "the hole we just came from is an exception."

They followed the bottom along for a distance of four or five miles, taking in the wonders of the deep.

Fishes of all sizes and shapes were swimming about them, and horrible looking crab-like monsters crawled upon the bottom.

The girls were both interested and frightened at what they saw, and a feminine cry of delight would suddenly be turned into one of horror, because, while admiring some beautiful fish, a hideous monster would shoot across the path of their vision.

After a rather lengthy study of the natural aquarium had been made, Ben brought the *Sea Wanderer* to a standstill on the bottom, and then suggested that some of them take a walk outside.

Joe and Charlie Reid were ready to accompany him, so the three promptly started.

In a few minutes they went out through the sea door, and their friends watched them from the pilot-house.

They did not remain out over twenty minutes, during which time Ben succeeded in capturing a fine, fat sea-turtle by spearing it through the neck.

This, together with some oysters, was carried aboard the *Sea Wanderer*, and turned over to the cook.

Then they arose to the surface, and, after taking in a fresh supply of air, turned in the direction of their headquarters on the uninhabited island.

"We will stock up with fresh water, game, and fruit this afternoon, and then start for home, or a trip around the world, just as you think best," said Bill Fisher.

"Our first duty will be to land the Misses Markham safely with their relatives in New York," observed the professor.

"That is so. We will start direct for New York, then," agreed Fisher.

It was shortly past noon when the *Sea Wanderer* got back to

her snug retreat, and, after a substantial repast of turtle soup, steaks and oysters, all hands went ashore, save Gus Simonson and Black Samson.

Ben, Joe, and Charlie Reid, provided with both rifles and shot-guns, set out for the interior of the island in search of game; Bill Fisher and the girls gathered fruit, and the professor hauled the end of a hose to a spring of fresh water, in order that the tanks might be filled.

It seemed that Ben and his two companions were to have excellent luck, for they began shooting pheasants almost as soon as they entered the woods.

They kept on toward the interior, having excellent success on the way, and presently started a small herd of wild hogs.

"Pork is very good eating!" exclaimed Reid. "We must chase those fellows up and get a couple of them."

Entering into the spirit of the thing, the two boys hastened after him in pursuit of the wild hogs.

They were forced to chase them fully half a mile before they got a shot at them, and then each succeeded in bringing one down.

They were just about to dress the slain animals and cut off the best portions of the meat when, with a yell, over a score of savages, with four white men in their midst, burst from the cover of the bushes and surrounded them!

CHAPTER XXVI.

BURIED ALIVE.

It was necessary for Jake Sterling to jump into the fray and lead those who stood by him, if he expected to gain a victory over the friends of the dead king.

Sterling was no coward, as has been shown on more than one occasion, and, revolver in hand, he sprang from the barrel and began shooting right and left into the opposing side.

His three companions followed his action, and then Beano's friends began to fall back.

"We will whip 'em!" shouted the self-proclaimed king. "I feel it in my bones that we will. At 'em, boys, and drive ther fools off ther island!"

The blacks who could understand him repeated his words to those who could not, and with yells of approval they forced the fight.

Back into the woods their opponents were forced, and, when Sterling and his three followers brought their rifles into play, they scattered and fled to the shore like a flock of sheep.

There were plenty of canoes lying there, so, pushing these off, the defeated blacks made for the island Beano had been chief of with all possible haste.

The mutineer leader thought that would be the last of it, but he was doomed to a bitter disappointment.

The defeated crowd, which numbered about a hundred and fifty, were bound that he should not rule them, so they made up their minds to get the male inhabitants of the other islands to return with them to the larger island and slay the white usurpers.

And Sterling was so elated over his victory that he ordered all the intoxicants the village contained to be placed at the disposal of his two hundred followers.

In less than one hour all hands were enjoying themselves in a glorious, not to say hilarious, manner.

Shortly before noon, when they were in anything but a good fighting condition, over five hundred savages landed upon the island.

They marched straight to the village, and reached it before the revelers were aware of their approach.

When the attack was made, Jack Sterling's followers became demoralized at once, and they fell right and left before the spear thrusts of their infuriated countrymen.

In exactly fifteen minutes from the time of the attack, the four white men and about forty of the blacks, who still stuck to them, were fleeing for their lives.

They managed to get hold of enough canoes at the shore to accommodate them, and, not daring to go for one of the inhabited islands, they made for a small, uninhabited one.

Several of the blacks were killed by spears, before they left the beach, and then, content with driving them away from the island, the victorious crowd went back to the village to elect a new king.

Glad to escape with their lives, Sterling's crowd reached the shore of the island, and made for the interior.

Selecting a suitable place, they pitched their camp and prepared to devise some means to regain the ground they had lost.

While they were studying over the matter, the sound of shooting came to their ears.

Instantly, Jake Sterling and his three white companions were all attention.

"That must be the fellers from the submarine boat," said one of them.

"Sure!" exclaimed Sterling. "They are shootin' game on this island. Now, then, all hands lay low! If there ain't too many of 'em, we may be able ter collar 'em, an', if we do, we might be able ter git hold of the boat."

Nearer and nearer came the sounds of the shooting, and a few minutes later the concealed party saw a herd of hogs slowly approaching.

"They are followin' the porkers," whispered one of the mutineers. "We will wait till they shoot, an' then we will go for 'em."

"We will," nodded Sterling, "even if ther whole crowd are together."

Patiently they waited, and in a short time they saw three forms cautiously approaching the herd of hogs, which had come to a halt in a thicket.

The three were Ben, Joe, and Charlie Reid, as the reader knows.

So nicely did Sterling work it that our friends were completely surrounded before they were aware of what had happened.

The mutineers had their rifles leveled at them, too, and they knew it would be dangerous for them to offer any resistance.

"How are you, gents?" inquired Sterling, in a mocking manner. "I want ter inform you that you are jist as good as three dead 'uns if you attempt ter pull a weapon!"

"What do you want of us?" demanded Ben, as soon as he had found the use of his tongue.

"You'll find that out later on," was the reply. "Here, some of you black fellers jist take the shootin' irons from 'em, an' then tie 'em up."

Our three friends felt that they dared not make any resistance, even then. The cold muzzle of a rifle covered the breast of each of them, and the look on the faces of the men who held the weapons satisfied them that they would only be too happy to press the triggers.

So they allowed their weapons to be taken from them with as good a grace as possible.

"We ain't got any rope ter tie them," said one of the mutineers, "an' these vines ain't ter be trusted."

After scratching his head in a thoughtful manner for a few moments, their leader exclaimed:

"Dig a hole about five feet deep! I'll fix 'em!"

The blacks had brought the canoe paddles with them, and, utilizing them as shovels, they set to work to carry out the order.

In half an hour they had completed it.

"Now, put ther three prisoners in ther hole," said Sterling, grinning in a satisfied manner as he spoke.

A feeling of extreme uneasiness came over our friends.

They hardly knew what the purpose of the villain was, and yet they felt that he did not intend to kill them.

As they were seized and thrust into the hole, the chins of Ben and Joe were barely even with the top of the ground.

"Throw in the dirt, an' pack it around 'em well. If they take their hands from ther sides while you are doin' it, shoot 'em, ter save further trouble," ordered the fiendish leader of the cutthroat gang.

Thud—thud! The dirt fell upon them in the form of an increasing avalanche, and in a very short time the hole was filled.

And Ben, Joe, and Reid were buried firmly in the soil, with naught but their heads above the ground.

The dirt was packed so tightly that neither of them could move a particle.

After surveying them for a few minutes, Jake Sterling approached them, and said:

"I am goin' ter send a messenger ter ther *Sea Wanderer* an' tell 'em if they will agree ter vacate her, they kin come here an' save your lives. If they refuse, another man will be sent back with the same message, an', ter show 'em that I mean business, will take along one of your heads with him!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GORY HEAD.

Professor Lehman's idea of running the hose ashore to the spring, in order to fill the tanks with fresh water, was a very good one, and would have turned out all right if the hose had been long enough.

As it was, they managed to pump about three barrels of water in, and then the spring lowered just enough so the suction end would not reach it.

Jamieson and Hardy were busily engaged in cleaning and renovating the interior of the submarine boat, but the professor, who had agreed to see that the tanks were filled, lost no time in calling them ashore.

Then the three of them each got a couple of buckets and started in to finish the job.

Meanwhile, Bill Fisher and the girls were stowing cocoanuts, oranges, and other fruit in large quantities aboard the boat.

They finished their work before the professor got through with his, so Jennie and Mattie went below to begin preserving some of the fruit so it would keep till the end of the cruise.

When the tanks were filled with water, Bill Fisher called Gus Simonson, from the pilot-house, suggested that they should follow in the wake of the boys and Charlie Reid, and see what luck they were having.

"They have fired enough shots to have a pretty good supply of game," said he; "and, as I have not heard a report in the past fifteen minutes, they must be on their way back with what they have bagged."

"All right," returned Gus; "I'll take my rifle and a couple of revolvers along. There is no telling but I might need them before we get back."

Leaving the rest aboard the *Sea Wanderer* to await their return, the two set out upon the trail of Ben, Joe, and Reid.

When they had walked along for about half a mile, they came to a bunch of partridges, which the hunters had hung in a tree to pick up when they came back.

"They are shooting more than they can carry, it seems," observed Fisher. "Get them down, Gus, and we'll take them along with us."

Simonson quickly climbed the tree to get the bunch of slain birds, and a couple of minutes later had them in his possession.

They were just about to proceed on their way again when they heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

"They are coming back!" exclaimed Gus.

Before his companion could make a reply, the figure of a man came in sight.

It was a white man, too, but it was neither of their friends.

"Jee-rusalem!" cried Fisher. "Who can this be?"

"It must be one of Jake Sterling's crowd," said Simonson. "Can it be possible that his gang is on the island?"

The approaching man caught sight of them at this moment, and promptly came to a halt.

"Hello!" called out Bill Fisher. "Who are you, stranger?"

"I belong to a party who are camped about a mile from here," was the reply. "Are you two fellows from the submarine boat?"

"I reckon we are."

"Then I have got a message for you."

"What is it?"

"Jake Sterling sent me to tell you if you didn't want your three friends killed you had better vacate the submarine boat at once!"

"Sterling has got a nerve," said Simonson. "What does he take us for—fools?"

"I don't know what he takes you for, but I do know that he will keep his word. If you people refuse to turn the *Sea Wanderer* over to him, he is going to cut the head off one of the young fellows and send it to you with a second demand."

"He is, eh?" exclaimed Gus Simonson, suddenly bringing his rifle on a line with the mutineer's breast. "Now, then, you step up here, or I'll drop you dead in your tracks!"

"That's it!" added Fisher. "Hurry up, now, you black-hearted scoundrel!"

This was not the exact sort of a reception the mutineer expected, and, when he saw the muzzle of the rifle staring him in the face, he began to tremble like a leaf.

"You don't mean that, do you? I'm only a messenger, and don't mean any harm to you," he stammered.

"I'll show you whether I mean it or not!" repeated Simonson. "Come here—and be lively about it!"

Without another word, the man obeyed.

He was not fool enough to attempt to run, for he knew if he did Simonson would fire, and that there would be a strong possibility of the bullet hitting him.

As he halted before the pair, he held his hands above his head, and allowed Bill Fisher to take his weapons from him.

"We'll take him aboard the *Sea Wanderer*," said he; "and then we will decide upon some means of getting the boys and Reid out of Jake Sterling's clutches."

So the mutineer's hands were tied behind him, and then Gus thrust the muzzle of his rifle against his back, and ordered him to walk.

It did not take them long to get back to the *Sea Wanderer*, and, as soon as their prisoner had been safely landed in the strong-room, Fisher and Simonson told of the message Jake Sterling had sent them.

"This is too bad!" exclaimed the professor. "Just as we were getting ready to leave the islands, thinking we were well rid of the mutineers and savages, and now to have this thing turn up!"

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Gus Simonson.

Jamieson and Hardy were for making an attack upon the camp of the villains, but Bill Fisher quickly decided that this would not do.

"They would kill our friends then, anyway," said he. "If we are going to rescue them, it must be done by strategy."

"I have a plan," spoke up the professor, after a minute of deep silence. "I have learned by reading the manuscript book of the inventor of this craft how to work a peculiar suit of clothes that are to be found on board. The suit is of rubber, dotted with minute steel scales, and has a battery attached to it. If it is big enough for me, I will put it on and go to the rescue of our friends. The moment they attempt to seize me, I will send them reeling to the ground from an electric shock. I am satisfied I can drive off the savages in this way. But the mutineers may open fire upon me and kill me."

"In order to prevent that, Hardy and I will follow you to their camp, and the moment either Sterling or his companions attempt to harm you, we will shoot them in their tracks."

"A good idea," observed Fisher. "Go ahead and carry it out at once. I reckon the rest of us can take care of the boat all right."

Professor Lehman quickly unlocked a closet in the room where they found the inventor of the submarine boat when they boarded it from the iceberg, and got out the electric suit of clothes.

Luckily, they were large enough for him to put on over his ordinary apparel, and, as soon as he had everything to his full satisfaction, he tested the power of the hidden battery.

It worked like a charm, so he said, and then, with naught but a brace of revolvers in his belt, he stepped ashore.

The two mates of the ill-fated *Event* followed him, both being armed to the teeth.

"God bless your efforts, and may you succeed in your undertaking!" exclaimed Jennie Markham, fervently; and her sister echoed her sentiments.

This was the first time the professor had ever attempted to do anything very daring, and he knew it as well as any of his companions.

But he resolved that this was a case of "do or die," and he meant to accomplish his purpose.

Jamieson and Hardy kept about a hundred yards behind him, keeping well behind the trees and bushes in case their enemies should be on the watch.

In this way they covered about one-fourth of a mile, and then they beheld a man coming toward them.

The mates were glad they had not seen them, so they hurried under the cover of the woods to reach their companion as soon as the stranger did.

The fellow who was approaching was one of Sterling's men, and the professor's heart almost arose to his throat at the thought of coming in contact with one of his enemies so soon.

But he plucked up sufficient courage to meet the man in an off-hand manner.

When they were within a dozen paces of each other, the mutineer exclaimed:

"Hello! Are you one of the fellers from ther submarine boat?"

"I am," answered the professor.

"Well, what did you do with ther man we sent to you a short time ago?"

"I guess he is safe enough."

"You have got him a prisoner, then?"

"Yes."

"Then I suppose you refused to agree to what Jake Sterling said?"

"We certainly did refuse."

"Maybe this will bring you to terms, then!"

As the mutineer spoke, he suddenly drew the gory head of a man from beneath his coat.

At the sight of the grewsome object, Professor Lehman staggered back in dismay.

"This is ther head of your man that we captured," went on the mutineer, with a leer; "Sterling says if you don't agree to what he says at once, he'll send the boys' heads along in half an hour from now."

Speechless with horror, the professor gazed at the ghastly head in the villain's hands.

It occurred to him that it must be that of Charlie Reid, and, as he realized the full extent of the fiendishness of the whole thing, the strength and courage of a lion came upon him.

With a quickness that he seemed hardly capable of, he sprang upon the mutineer and seized him in a vise-like grip.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

STERLING IN HARD LUCK.

Ben Melville felt very uncomfortable when he saw Sterling dispatch a messenger to the *Sea Wanderer*.

He knew his friends would not be apt to leave the vessel so the mutineers could get possession of it—in fact, he would not have them do such a thing if they would.

What, then, would be the result when the man came back with the unsatisfactory answer? Would Jake Sterling keep his word, and cut one of their heads off and send it to those aboard the *Sea Wanderer*, to let them know he meant business?

Fortunately, the three captives had the use of their tongues, and, as they were not interfered with by either the whites or savages, they conversed in whispers about the messenger, and the word they expected him to bring back.

Half an hour passed, and the fellow did not return.

Jake Sterling began pacing back and forth, in an angry mood.

"I told that man to come straight back and tell me what the people had to say, and, if he ain't been collared by them, he ought ter be here by this time," the villain muttered.

Suddenly he heard the sounds of an angry discussion behind him.

Turning, he was just in time to see one of his men receive a spear thrust from one of the savages.

Like a whirlwind, Sterling rushed to the spot.

"What's ther matter?" he roared.

"Matter!" echoed his single remaining follower. "Why, Tom was fool enough ter go an' stab one of ther niggers, an' now he is done up hisself!"

This was true enough. The mutineer was dead even now, as the spear had pierced his heart.

After a little questioning, Sterling found that it was all the victim's fault, so, not wishing to arouse the savages against him, he did not take the slayer to task.

"Things are gittin' putty tough," said his man, after a pause. "If them fellers aboard ther *Sea Wanderer* have got Sam in their clutches, you an' me will be ther only ones left of our once big crowd."

"That's so!" exclaimed Sterling, gnashing his teeth savagely. "An' that makes me feel as though we must have that submarine boat, anyhow, now."

"We sart'ly must, cap."

"Have you got an idea how we can get the boat?"

"Didn't you say you was goin' ter cut one of ther prisoners' heads off an' send it down ter ther boat if they refused ter turn it over ter us?"

"Yes; but I don't want ter do that till there is no other way ter make a deal with 'em. We may be forced to ask them to take us away from these islands as prisoners."

"Which wouldn't be a very nice way to leave."

"No, I calculate it wouldn't."

"Say, cap, I've got an idea!"

"What is it?"

"Don't you think poor Tom's head looks like ther oldest one of them fellers we've got buried out there?"

Sterling gave a start.

"Yes, somewhat," said he. "Their hair an' mustaches are ther same color, an' they are about the same age. You want Tom's head sent down ter ther submarine boat?"

"Exactly. They'll think it is ther head of their man, an' they may come ter terms right away then."

"Will you take it to them?"

"Yes; I don't like ter cart poor Tom's head like a head of cabbage, but I'll do it, 'cause I think it is necessary."

Walking over to the group of savages, Sterling asked one of their number to cut off the dead man's head.

Hard-hearted as he was, he could not have brought himself to do it, and it is not likely that his companion would, even if he did agree to carry the ghastly thing to the *Sea Wanderer*.

One of the blacks quickly executed the job, and then, after the mutineer had imbibed a copious drink of rum to steady his nerves, he picked it up and started off.

The moment he was out of sight, the leader of the savages approached Jake Sterling, and said:

"Um black people t'ink dey go back to de odder island an' live with their people again."

"What!" demanded the mutineer. "Do you mean ter leave me in ther lurch now?"

"Yes; um go, an' dat settle it!"

"Well, confound you! Go on, then!"

"Yes; um go right away, an' you go wif us!"

"What!"

"You cause all um trouble, so we take you to our people, an' dey kill you; den we git um pardon."

As the savage ceased speaking, half a dozen of his followers sprang upon the astonished white villain and bore him to the ground.

His weapons were taken from him in a jiffy, and then his hands were tied securely behind him by means of his own belt.

The old mutineer, who had had his own way so long, was at last in the toils!

And Ben, Joe, and Reid, buried in the soil to their chins, were witnesses of the remarkable proceedings.

They felt that the climax had now arrived!

There were one of three things the savages were bound to do. The first was to leave the three where they were, and depart from the island; the second was to slay them; and the third was to dig them up and take them away with Sterling.

Which would they do? This was the question the three helpless mortals asked themselves.

Their excitement was now aroused to a fever heat, and nervously they awaited the verdict.

A minute later a simultaneous sigh of relief came from their lips.

The savages were going to leave them just as they were!

Without looking at them at all, the entire crowd started away in the direction of the shore.

"Now, then," whispered Charlie Reid, "our friends will surely be along in a few minutes searching for us. When we get out of this, I guess our troubles will be about over. Jake Sterling has run the length of his rope, and the chances are that he will be slaughtered before many hours pass."

"The savages must have changed their minds pretty quickly, or they would not have made the villain a prisoner," returned Ben.

"Those fellows are apt to change their minds very suddenly," spoke up Joe. "They—— By gracious! they have changed their minds now!"

A cry of dismay came from the lips of his companions.

And no wonder! Half a dozen savages were coming back toward them at the top of their speed!

They had their spears ready for instant use, which showed that they meant no good to the three heads that were sticking above the surface of the ground in such a strange fashion.

"We are done for now, I guess!" cried Ben, his face turning as white as a sheet.

At that instant the cracking of a couple of rifles rang out, and the savages began tumbling to the ground.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HIT BY A CANNON BALL.

When the professor seized hold of the mutineer, the full strength of the electric battery his suit of clothes contained was turned on.

In fifteen seconds from the time he pounced upon him, the man was as limp as a dishrag.

The terrible hug he had received was almost enough to kill him, to say nothing of the current of electricity.

As it was, the villain's ribs were broken in more than one place when the excited professor allowed him to drop to the ground.

But that was not all. The mutineer was as dead as a smoked mackerel!

As he fell in a heap, the gory head dropped from his hands and rolled to the professor's feet.

Just then Hardy and Jamieson came out of the bushes.

"We saw it all, professor," said the former. "Whose head is this, anyway?"

"It is Charlie Reid's," was the reply, in a husky tone.

"Was Reid bald on the crown of his head?" questioned Jamieson.

The professor gave a start, and turned his gaze upon the head.

"No!" he exclaimed: "Charlie Reid was not bald!"

"Then this isn't his head."

"I believe you are right," spoke up the professor, in a hopeful tone.

The features were covered with blood, so there was no chance to recognize the head that way, but all three were satisfied that it was not Reid's.

"Let us hurry to the place this fellow came from, and we may find who the head belongs to!" cried Hardy.

"Good!" exclaimed Jamieson. "Come on, professor!"

The three now started on a run through the bushes, following the plain trail that was before them.

Encumbered as he was with his electric suit, the professor could not keep up with the mates.

But they kept on, however, allowing him to follow as best he could.

In about five minutes they came in sight of the camp of the savages and their white allies.

At first they thought it was deserted, but the next instant they beheld the heads of their three friends protruding from the soil.

Full of wonder at the strange sight, they started to investigate.

It was just at that moment the savages came back to slay the helpless captives.

The mates divined their intentions immediately, and their rifles flew to their shoulders.

They fired but half a dozen shots, killing four of the blacks and causing the others to take to their heels.

Then they hurried to the spot where Reid and the two boys were buried, and began digging them out.

They had their job about half completed when Professor Lehman arrived on the scene.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "So you are all alive, eh?"

"Yes, but buried, at that," replied Reid.

"We must hurry and get you out before the natives take it in their heads to come back," said Jamieson.

"I don't think they will come back," spoke up Ben. "There are very few of them left, and they have no rascally white men to urge them on."

"Why, where is Jake Sterling?"

"He is all that is left of the mutineers, and they have made him a prisoner and are taking him over to the big island to have him killed."

Exclamations of surprise came from the lips of the three newcomers.

"I guess that is the last we shall ever see of Sterling," said Joe.

"He deserves his fate," answered the professor.

Five minutes later Reid and the two boys were pulled out of the hole, and then all hands made for the *Sea Wanderer* as fast as their legs could carry them.

They reached the boat, taking what game they had shot with them, without seeing anything more of the savages.

"I am so glad we are together once more!" cried Jennie Markham, and all hands responded by giving a hearty cheer.

After ten minutes of conversation, the professor proposed that they set their prisoner ashore and give him his weapons.

This was instantly agreed upon, so the mutineer was brought up from the strong-room.

He did not even thank them when he stepped ashore, though he seemed heartily glad to get off so easy.

"Now, the best thing we can do is to leave these parts at once," observed Ben.

"I agree with you!" exclaimed Joe.

"Start right now, then," said Bill Fisher. "If we run short of provisions, we will stop at some port and store up."

All vowed they had had enough of Satan's Islands, so five minutes later the *Sea Wanderer* left the shore and glided seaward.

All that day and the next the weather proved fine, so they kept upon the surface of the ocean.

But the third day out a terrible storm arose, and, in order to escape being tossed about in such a violent manner, the boat was sunk about forty feet.

Down here the water was almost still, and they forged along at a fair rate of speed.

Of course, they came to the surface occasionally to take in fresh air.

For two days the storm continued, and Ben reckoned that they were now somewhere near the track of vessels bound for Australia.

"We must keep a sharp lookout," said he. "If we should happen to rise near a ship, we might be taken for some marine monster, and get into trouble."

"We could sink again immediately we saw we were noticed," replied Joe.

"That would be the best thing to do," spoke up Bill Fisher. "For my part, I don't think it will be advisable for us to land at any civilized port. Our boat would surely excite the suspicions of the authorities, and the chances are we would all be arrested."

"When we go ashore, we must land at some out of the way place, during the night," said the professor.

Shortly after this conversation, Ben turned in to get a few hours' rest.

While asleep, he dreamed that the *Sea Wanderer* was not destined to reach New York, and the dream was so vivid that he could not refrain from telling it to his companions when he awoke.

When Black Samson heard it, he immediately showed signs of alarm.

"We best git ready ter leab at a minute's notice," said he. "Me believe in dreams."

He got laughed at for saying this; but he shook his head, and repeated his words.

Whether there was anything in Ben's dream or not, it is impossible to say; but, anyhow, early the next morning, as the *Sea Wanderer* arose to the surface, our friends were astonished to see a man-of-war not a quarter of a mile distant.

They saw it was a Frenchman, and then, wishing to get out of her sight as soon as possible, Ben gave the signal to go below the surface.

Even as he did so, there came a puff of smoke from the man-of-war, and the next minute the submarine boat received such a shock that she was turned completely over.

"We have been hit!" cried Bill Fisher, scrambling to his feet. "Jee-rusalem! I guess we are done for now!"

Even as he spoke, a torrent of water poured in upon them!

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

Our friends were filled with consternation when they saw the water pouring into the cabin of the *Sea Wanderer*.

"We are sinking!" exclaimed Ben. "To the deck at once!"

"De dream hab come true!" cried Black Samson. "Here am de life-preservers—I hab dem all ready!"

He handed each one of the party one of the aticles in question, and then Ben flung open the deck door.

Seizing a few articles that were of the most value to them, they rushed on deck.

It was plain to all hands that the wonderful vessel was doomed.

Already she had sunk till her deck was on a line with the water, and it needed but one good wave to cause her to go down.

Ben seized the hand of Jennie, and Joe performed a like service for Mattie, and then, with a one, two, three, all hands sprang into the sea.

They had scarcely done so, when, with a mighty lurch, the *Sea Wanderer* disappeared beneath the waves.

The life-preservers kept the heads of our friends above water, and, unable to do anything else for the present, they gazed at each other in blank dismay.

Bill Fisher was the first to break the silence, and, with his mouth full of sea water, he blurted out:

"Jee-rusalem, but we are in a pickle now, and no mistake!"

"I guess we are—if salt water is any sort of a pickle," responded Gus Simonson.

"Here comes a couple of boats from the man-of-war after us!" exclaimed Charlie Reid.

This was a fact. The boats were just leaving the side of the vessel, and the men in them were rowing as though their very lives depended on it.

All hands were soon comfortably located aboard the man-of-war, after which the professor told the officers of their adventures since the time they had set sail from New York.

Whether the story was believed or not our friends did not know, and it is sufficient to say that they did not care a great deal.

In due time they were landed at San Francisco, and, bidding good-by to the officers and crew of the French man-of-war, they went ashore, the professor having in his possession the document he had exacted from the captain.

"Do you know what is the best thing to do with that paper?" said Bill Fisher, when they were comfortably settled in one of the leading hotels.

"What?" questioned the professor.

"Tear it up. Our story will not be believed, and we will be taken for a lot of cranks. We had better let the thing drop. For my part, I have had enough adventure, anyhow, and, as we have all the diamonds we found, we have enough wealth to live on, without seeking to get remunerated for the loss of the *Sea Wanderer*."

This was a common-sense argument, and all agreed with him after they thought the matter over.

So the document was torn up, and that ended it.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 9, will contain "The Dark Secret; or, Sam Short, the Stowaway," by Launce Payntz.

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